

# **The Justifications for War and Peace in World Religions**

## **Part II: Extracts, Summaries and Comparisons of Scriptures of Religions of Indic Origin (Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism)**

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### **Defence R&D Canada – Toronto**

Contract Report  
DRDC Toronto CR 2010-034  
April 2010

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## Abstract

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One of the most important decisions of any nation or armed group is when, if ever, to wage war or apply armed force. Such life-and-death judgements are informed by and sometimes determined by ethical principles and religious beliefs. World religions all provide guidelines on when armed force is justified. Are the permissions and prohibitions similar among religions? The present work seeks to map out the spectrum of religious approaches to armed force, as expressed in the scriptures of the world's largest religions. Though the interpretations of religious scriptures vary considerably, the texts themselves provide a sense of each religion's approach to the issue. Covering values from absolute pacifism, where armed force is not permissible under any circumstances, to strong militancy, where armed force is readily adopted, this research compiles, compares and contrasts important scriptural passages. Along with the associated DRDC reports, it presents a *tour d'horizon*, surveying scriptures from seven world religions. The previous report, constituting Part I of the work, analyses three Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam and Judaism) while this report, Part II, covers religions of Indic origin (Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism). The important scriptures from each religion are briefly introduced and the relevant verses are extracted, categorized and summarized. This makes possible, in each religion, the juxtaposition of passages justifying the use of force with passages suggesting the opposite. More broadly, a comparison is presented in Part III in both a descriptive and a schematic fashion to illustrate the differences between the scriptures within each religion and the differences between the religions. The religious approaches are compared by examining how they answer the basic questions about war: Why? Who? When? Where? What? How? This variance is illustrated in the Part III by locating religious scriptures along a spectrum of force.

## Résumé

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Une des décisions les plus importantes auxquelles sont confrontés une nation ou un groupe armé consiste à déterminer les circonstances, s'il y a lieu, qui justifient de faire la guerre ou de s'engager dans une intervention armée. Or, le règlement de telles questions de vie ou de mort repose habituellement sur des principes éthiques et des croyances religieuses. En effet, les grandes religions du monde donnent des lignes directrices sur les situations où l'emploi de la force armée se justifie. Mais les permissions et les interdictions à cet égard se ressemblent-elles d'une religion à l'autre? Le présent ouvrage a pour objet de décrire le spectre des positions concernant l'usage de la force armée qui sont exprimées dans les saintes écritures des grandes religions du monde. Certes, les interprétations de ces écritures peuvent varier considérablement, mais les textes eux-mêmes donnent une bonne idée de la position de chaque religion sur la question. Passant des valeurs prônées dans le cadre d'un pacifisme absolu, où l'emploi de la force armée n'est admis dans aucune circonstance, jusqu'au militantisme convaincu, qui adopte sans réserve l'usage de la force armée, la présente étude compile et compare des passages importants des saintes écritures et met en relief les contrastes constatés. De concert avec les rapports connexes de Recherche et développement pour la défense Canada (RDDC), elle présente un tour d'horizon des livres sacrés de sept grandes religions du monde. Le rapport précédent, qui constitue la partie I de l'ouvrage, s'intéresse à trois religions abrahamiques, à savoir le christianisme, l'islam et le judaïsme; le présent rapport, soit la partie II, porte sur les religions d'origine indo-aryenne, c'est-à-dire le bouddhisme, l'hindouisme, le jainisme et le sikhisme. Les importantes écritures retenues pour chacune de ces religions sont brièvement présentées, et les versets pertinents en sont extraits, classés et résumés. Cela permet la juxtaposition, pour les différentes religions, des passages justifiant l'emploi de la force et de ceux qui préconisent l'inverse. De façon plus générale, la partie III présente une comparaison à la fois descriptive et schématique illustrant les différences entre les écritures au sein des religions et entre les religions. De plus, les positions des religions peuvent être confrontées les unes avec les autres au moyen d'un simple examen des réponses données aux questions élémentaires relativement à la guerre : Pourquoi? Qui? Quand? Où ? Quoi? Comment? Cette variance est illustrée dans la partie III en positionnant les divers textes religieux sur un spectre de force.



## **Executive summary**

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### **The Justifications for War and Peace in World Religions Part II: Extracts, Summaries and Comparisons of Scriptures in Indic Religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism)**

**A. Walter Dorn; Raj Balkaran; Seth Feldman; Stephen Gucciardi; DRDC  
Toronto CR 2010-34; Defence R&D Canada – ; 2010.**

Religious scriptures have often been used to justify a particular course of action, be it violent or peaceful, as shown in the Executive Summary of Part I (Abrahamic Religions). The identification and summary of the relevant excerpts from religious scriptures is the immediate purpose of this project. Scripture is defined as the most common document or documents to which the widest numbers of adherents refer. This identification of scriptures is made more difficult in the Indic context, because it is only relatively recently that Indic teachings have taken the form of written “documents.” Most of the sacred works used here were composed and transmitted orally over many centuries, and thus gave rise to significant variant recensions. The authors of this report have employed scholar-edited critical editions where possible, while bearing in mind that the concept of “scripture” as understood in Abrahamic faiths does not always apply in the Indic context. Nevertheless, these works afford at least a peephole into strains of ethical discourse of these religions.

While the companion report (Part I) investigated the three most widespread Abrahamic religions—Christianity, Islam, Judaism—this report (Part II) quotes scriptures from four Indic-origin religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Each set of scriptures is introduced and the extracts are summarized before they are listed. The scriptural extracts are presented in a different font (Garamond) than the commentary (Times New Roman) and some key words in each excerpt are bolded or underlined for ease of scanning and reference. The work identifies the more pacific and the more militant passages of each religion.

In Part III, all seven religions are compared and contrasted. That document uncovers passages that come closest to answering basic questions about the use of force. It also concludes the two parts with a proposed model to position religious texts from the seven world religions along a spectrum of force. The goal of these twin reports is to create a research and educational tool, through a compilation of scriptural extracts relevant to war and peace, which will promote the understanding of religious scriptures in the Canadian Forces and the wider world.

This report should serve as a useful reference work on religious scriptures in relation to war and peace, as well as an analytical work which compares and contrasts different passages in scripture. A similar scriptural comparison of the justifications for war and peace in Indic religions does not seem to be available in the literature. This work straddles the field of religious studies, one of the humanities, and the wider peace and security field, which is partly a social science. While the authors are sensitive to the drawbacks of drawing scriptural voices out from their historical context, they nevertheless present the scriptural passages in as simple and straightforward a

manner as possible. Such passages can give an indication of how parties interested in justifying the use of force, be they thinkers, politicians, combatants or religious practitioners, might use scriptural passages. This culmination of this scriptural analysis aims at stimulating conversation about religious rules and policies associated with war and armed force. As a result, this work can serve as the basis for a wider effort to compare and contrast different religious scriptures, and later, religious sects, thinkers and religio-cultural practices.

## Sommaire

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### **La justification de la guerre et de la paix dans les religions du monde; Partie II : Extraits, sommaires et comparaisons des textes sacrés des religions d'origine indo-aryenne (Bouddhisme, Hindouisme, Jaïnisme et Sikhisme)**

**A. Walter Dorn; Raj Balkaran; Seth Feldman; Stephen Gucciardi; RDDC  
Toronto CR 2010-034; Recherche et développement pour la défense Canada –  
Toronto; 2010.**

Les textes religieux ont souvent été utilisés pour justifier un mode d'action particulier, qu'il s'agisse de violence ou d'actions pacifiques, comme l'indique le sommaire de la partie I sur les religions abrahamiques. Le présent document a pour objet premier de relever et de résumer les passages pertinents à cette fin dans les saintes écritures. Par saintes écritures, on entend ici, le ou les documents les plus couramment considérés par la majorité des fidèles d'une religion donnée comme le fondement de leur foi. Cette identification des écritures est rendue d'autant plus difficile, dans le contexte indo-aryen, par le fait que ce type d'enseignement n'a pris la forme de documents écrits qu'assez récemment. La majorité des textes sacrés dont il est question ici ont été composés et transmis oralement au cours de nombreux siècles, et ont donc donné lieu à des différences importantes dans les recensions. Les auteurs du présent rapport ont employé des éditions critiques révisées par des érudits dans la mesure du possible, en ayant garde d'oublier que le concept d'« écriture » tel qu'on l'entend dans la foi abrahamique ne s'applique pas toujours dans le contexte indo-aryen. Néanmoins, ces travaux offrent au moins un aperçu des styles de discours éthiques de ces religions.

Alors que le précédent rapport (partie I) enquête sur les religions abrahamiques les plus répandues – christianisme, islam, judaïsme – le présent rapport (partie II) cite des écritures de quatre religions d'origine indo-aryenne : bouddhisme, hindouisme, jaïnisme, sikhisme. Chaque ensemble d'écritures fait l'objet d'une courte introduction; on y trouve également des extraits résumés de ces textes. Ces extraits sont présentés en une police de caractère différente (Garamond) de la police du commentaire (Times New Roman); certains mots clés sont en caractère gras ou soulignés à des fins de balayage et de référence. L'étude relève les passages les plus pacifiques et les plus combattifs de chaque religion.

La partie III compare les sept religions et les met en contraste. L'ouvrage relève les passages où l'on trouve les réponses les plus directes possible aux questions élémentaires sur l'usage de la force. Il conclut également les deux parties par une proposition de modèle pour placer les textes religieux des sept grandes religions du monde sur un spectre de force. L'objectif de ces deux rapports parallèles est de créer un outil de recherche et d'enseignement, à l'aide d'une compilation d'extraits des écritures religieuses ayant trait à la guerre et à la paix; cet outil servira à promouvoir la compréhension des textes sacrés dans les Forces canadiennes et dans le monde entier.

Le présent rapport est un ouvrage de référence utile pour illustrer le lien entre les livres sacrés et les enjeux de la guerre et de la paix; il se veut un document d'analyse permettant de comparer et de mettre en contraste les différents passages des textes sacrés. Il ne semble pas que la littérature contienne une semblable comparaison des éléments justifiant la guerre et la paix dans les religions d'origine indo-aryenne. Cette étude traite du domaine des sciences religieuses, qui compte parmi les sciences humaines, mais elle touche également aux dossiers plus larges de la paix et de la sécurité, qui relève en partie des sciences sociales. Tout en étant sensibles aux inconvénients qu'entraîne le fait d'extraire de leur contexte historique des paroles des textes sacrés, les auteurs présentent des passages des écritures d'une manière aussi simple et directe que possible. De tels passages peuvent donner une indication de la façon dont ceux – penseurs, politiciens, combattants ou adeptes religieux - qui veulent justifier le recours à la force peuvent se servir des textes sacrés. Cette analyse des écritures vise à stimuler la conversation sur les règles et les politiques religieuses associées à la guerre et au recours à la force armée. En conséquence, ce travail peut servir de base à un effort plus vaste de comparaison et de mise en contraste des écrits sacrés de diverses religions et, plus tard, des sectes religieuses, des penseurs et des pratiques religieuses et culturelles.

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## Acknowledgements

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The principal investigator/author thanks the Adversarial Intent section of DRDC Toronto for financial and moral support. In particular, Dr. David Mandel provided unstinting assistance and exhibited great patience as this exploration grew to larger dimensions. The principal author also thanks the excellent research assistants who helped develop this report: Raj Balkaran, Raoul Bedi, Seth Feldman, and Stephen Gucciardi, who worked on the scriptures of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism, respectively. Also much valued is the manuscript review and copy editing done by Anne Frances Cation and Cameron Harrington.

# 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

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Religious scriptures have been frequently invoked to justify or oppose the use of armed force. Throughout history, one can find many instances of scriptural passages being cited to encourage participation in warfare and increase adversarial intent or to foster peace and sympathetic understanding. Some examples from the Abrahamic faiths were described in the Introduction of Part I of this three-part report series.

Knowledge of the scriptural sources is useful to those who wish to understand people or societies in which religion plays a role, particularly the motivations and justifications for war and peace. Scriptural knowledge is also useful to those who seek to engage with religiously-inspired people, combatants and their supporters. Knowing the reasons for recourse to war or violence and the alleged scriptural support could contribute to the peace process by providing insight into the personal justifications of the leaders and fighters. Furthermore, mediators and negotiators may choose to challenge extremists' scriptural interpretations favouring war by presenting alternative passages or interpretations that offer a more peaceful perspective.

Comparative religion is also valuable to foster a deeper understanding among religions and to provide greater insight into the human condition worldwide. The goal of this report is to facilitate the reader's understanding of and ability to analyze and compare scriptural justifications for war and peace. Through its compilation of scriptural excerpts and accompanying summaries, it aims to create a research and educational tool which will promote reading and understanding of religious scriptures within the Canadian Forces and the wider world.

## 1.1 Source selection and definition of scripture

Academically and religiously there is a wide diversity of opinion about the definition of "scripture." Scripture is defined here pragmatically as the most common document or documents to which a large number (majority) of religious adherents from a particular religion refer. Determining this can sometimes be difficult, particularly in religions of Indic origin.

Hinduism benefits from a long and rich history of sacred texts, from which its multiple sects and facets draw in variegated ways. Different groups prioritize and emphasize different texts/passages. This ancient religion understands itself as founded in the Vedas, a set of four orally transmitted liturgical Sanskrit compilations, accepted as divine revelation, unauthored by human minds. The oldest of these, the Rig Veda, dates back to 1500 BCE, composed by a nomadic people originating most likely in central Asia. While Hindus across a wide variety of sects tacitly recognize the authority of the Vedas, the texts hold little relevance for the average Hindu household. These hymns are at times recited during ceremonial ritual. By contrast, however, the great Sanskrit epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, contain a wide variety of mythological material with which the Indian masses are much more familiar. They both contain

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<sup>1</sup> By A. Walter Dorn with assistance of Raj Balkaran, Raoul Bedi, Anne Frances Cation, Seth Feldman and Stephen Gucciardi.

elaborate discussions of war and examples of proper (righteous) behaviour. As such they constitute rich sources for this study. A variety of other Hindu texts discuss ethical and political behaviour, informed by the intellectual and religious environment in which the authors lived. Further, there are within the tradition a number of more esoteric texts, such as the Upanishads, which speak to the ascetic or mystic rather than the warrior, and focus on liberation, rather than the epic and shastra literature which are concerned with how one ought to behave in social life. The concerns of Upanishadic literature and the like therefore, fall outside of the aims of this study.

The sacred writings of Buddhism number in the thousands and form a collection of astonishing breadth. No single scripture bears a preeminent position and various sects of Buddhism give different weight to different texts. However, the texts of the three main Buddhist branches (Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna) are derived from the *Tripitakas* (three baskets). These are three collections of *Suttas* or discourses that the Buddha is alleged to have spoken to various audiences. Originally written down in the Pali language, this massive collection of writings has been translated variously into Sanskrit, Tibetan, and, more recently, other Asian and European languages. Over the centuries, the *Suttas* have been given over to redaction and different sects have their own textual variations. Even within the same sect multiple variations of a single text are often found. In the “greater tradition,” which includes but is not confined to the Theravāda school, there are three main categories of text: (1) the early canonical writings preserved in the Pali *Tipitaka* believed to have come from the Buddha himself; (2) paracanonical works which followed shortly after the canon but for reasons unknown were not included by the time the canon was consolidated; and (3) pseudo-canonical and non-canonical texts including the *Sutras* of the Mahāyāna school and the Mantras of the Vajrayāna school, as well as other commentarial works that are nonetheless considered to be canonical within their own respective branches of the tradition. Taken together, these categories make up a vast collection of individual writings of varying authority in the religion. For the present work, those texts which contain reference to war or outer violence were chosen, particularly those texts which are widely read and distributed. Fortunately, many of the texts are available electronically online. (See, in particular, [www.sacred-texts.com/bud](http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud) and [www.accesstoinsight.org](http://www.accesstoinsight.org).) These texts may have minor variations on the issue of the use of force but the variation is small in comparison with the wide spectrum of religious approaches overall.

Sikhism provides an exception amongst the Indic religions: it has only one primary scripture. That scripture even serves as something even greater: the Gurū Granth Sāhib acts as the unquestioned head of the community and is recognized as the living Guru, a teacher linking the student to the divine. As the focus of Sikh religious life and the locus of Sikh theology, the Gurū Granth Sāhib has a central role more similar to scriptures within the Abrahamic faiths than those of other Indic religions. Another Sikh text, the Dasam Granth, has engendered considerable controversy. While many Sikhs view it as a holy text, most do not consider it as an authoritative guide. Still, it contains many insights into the Sikh views on war and fighting, so is worthy of exploration here.

Jain scriptures are also numerous and diverse but they are uniform in their condemnation of violence. This report examines the Tattvartha Sutra and Purushartasiddhapaya, two texts which speak extensively about non-violence (*ahimsā*). The former text is particularly important in that it is accepted by all Jains and widely regarded as an excellent compendium of Jain philosophy. Brief mention is also made in this report of the Mahāvratas, five vows taken by all Jain monks.

Non-violence is at the core of Jainism. In fact, one of the mottos of the faith is “Non-violence is the highest religion” (*ahimsā paramo dharmah*). Because of the unequivocal approach against the use of force, few Jain texts needed to be reviewed for this study.

All texts were examined in English translation, relying upon scholarly renditions. In accessing the works in translation, connotations and flavours proper to the original text may be lost, but the general meanings usually remain intact.

In cases where a reliable scholarly translation of a scripture was not available electronically (as was the case for the *Rāmāyaṇa*), an authoritative print version was located and visually scanned for key terms and concepts.

Short background introductions for each scripture precede a summary of the scriptural extracts. The quoted passages are then presented in a different font (Garamond) than the introduction and summary. Certain words in the excerpts have also been bolded for emphasis and ease of browsing.

The scriptures originate in drastically different times and places. Despite the contextual diversity among these texts, they share a universal concern about the loss of human life. The authors of this report are cognizant of the rich cultural nuances and historical references in these texts, as well as the drawbacks of engaging in such a vast and unnuanced sweep of the tradition as this study demands. However, exploring the historio-cultural context is beyond the scope of this scriptural exegesis. One aim of this work is to ascertain the extent to which these ancient traditions offer similar approaches in their treatment of warfare and preservation of peace. In so doing, this report offers a preliminary contribution to comparative-religious and cross-cultural discourse on war and peace.

The basic questions about the use of force are asked for each set of religious scriptures. Because of the close overlap between the basic questions and the themes of the Just War tradition, some of the questions are framed in language drawn from that tradition. We consider this an acceptable interpretive framework given that the Just War tradition a) results from the most sustained known intellectual query into the ethics of force cross-culturally, and b) forms the basis of the modern laws governing international armed conflict.

## **1.2 Methodology and methodological limitations**

The authors of this report used a linguistic basis, keywords, to begin their compilation of relevant scriptural passages. Keyword searches directed the authors towards excerpts in Indic scriptures. The keywords are listed in the introduction of each chapter. The keywords were chosen to be appropriate for each scripture so as to obtain as many relevant hits as possible. The verses surrounding these keywords were likewise reviewed for relevant content.

In addition to grouping the excerpts under general headings specific to each religion, passages from different religions were grouped together in Chapter 6 according to a common classification system. How each answers the basic interrogative questions regarding war: Why? Who? When? Where? What? How?

We employ this methodology with the intention of creating a comprehensive, thematic survey despite the length and scope of these scriptures. One of this method's strengths is that it allows a broad overview of the wide range of scriptural passages along with a basic classification of passages that aids a comparative analysis. The work seeks to increase the accessibility of these passages, which have gained increased salience in current conflicts, as well as in the evolving literature on war and peace. We offer a *tour d'horizon* and invite future scholarship to more narrowly develop aspects of these issues. This exposition should be of interest to scholars, the general public and practitioners—members of the Canadian Forces in particular.

The limitations as well as strengths of this approach should also be acknowledged. First, scripture is only one component of a set of religious beliefs. It is often considered the heart of many religions and provides a source of inspiration and guidance to generations of adherents across wide geographical areas and diverse communities, but the writings, speeches and examples of teachers are also important. Second, there are various versions of the scripture, as discussed above. Thirdly, there are often divergent interpretations of the same text. Various religious schools interpret scriptures differently, often with the guidance of secondary texts unique to those particular schools. Thus the Indic emphasis on the need for a *bona fide* teacher (one who possesses sufficient understanding of the text) in order to properly access the work. An analysis of the great many commentaries on religious scripture is beyond the purview of this work, or any work, due both to the lack of important materials (speeches and activities) and the plethora of opinion.

This study provides a modest exegetic interpretation of the various justifications for war and violence using words that are as close as possible to those in the scriptures. All effort was taken to let the scriptural excerpts speak for themselves. The authors caution, however, against simple “proof-texting,” the superficial use of a quotation taken out of context, especially when made to sound like an authoritative and definitive reference. When a text is used without an understanding of the context of the writings and the writers, the original meaning can be lost and the value for dialogue diminished. By collecting together all relevant passages, much can be revealed about a religion's basic approach to the subject of war and peace. When quotes are grouped and introduced, the broader thrust of each religion's approach can be appreciated.

Furthermore, categorizing passages can help in their interpretation. The similarity to Just War themes are noted to help make comparisons to that tradition. But being a religious studies exercise and not a social science analysis, these categorizations were not subjected to the tests of scientific scrutiny—namely, determining the level of inter-rater reliability using approaches such as independent review and quantitative analysis of reliability such as correlation, percent correct, or some other measure of agreement. Future research from a social science perspective could develop the present exercise in that direction by examining inter-rater reliability and developing a more standard set of coding guidelines.

### 1.3 Overview

Using the aforementioned guidelines for scriptural analysis, this work examines the scriptures of religions of Indic origin, presenting excerpts that deal with war, armed force, violence and peace. This is thought to be the first compilation and comparison of scriptural passages from Indic religions dealing with armed force, and, when read alongside Part I, it almost certainly is the only



report which extends its scriptural compilation to seven world religions. Thus, both reports taken together cover the world's largest religions. These religions are listed by percentage of world population in Figure 1.1.

This figure shows the religions covered in this work: religions having over five million adherents. Jainism, the smallest, with approximately five million followers, is important for this study because it is based on non-violence, forming an important pole on the force spectrum. Given that non-violence also enjoys a place of esteem in other religions, particularly Buddhism and Hinduism (as evidenced through the works of the modern leader Mahatma Gandhi), it is fruitful to turn our attention to the Jain tradition which largely defines itself by adherence to *ahiṃsā*. Owing to restrictions of time and space, along with the relatively diminished global impact, other smaller religions have thus far been omitted from this study.

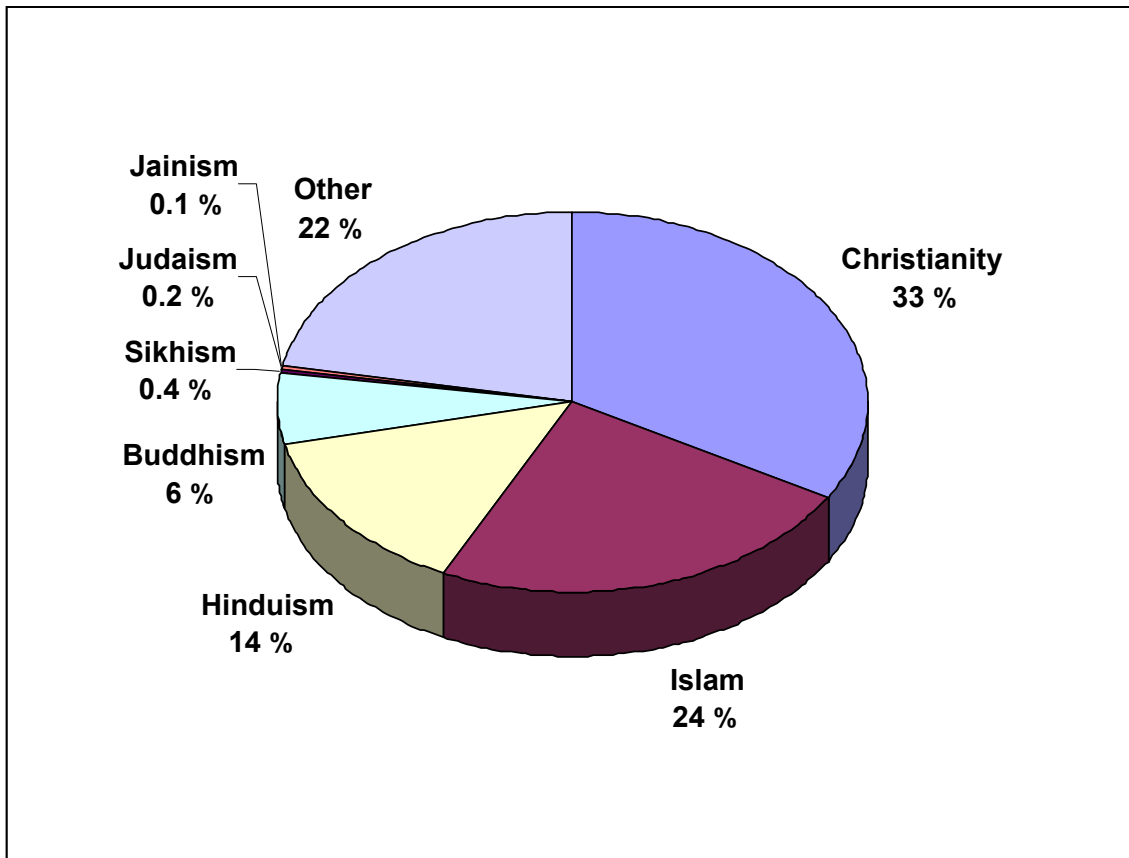


Figure 1.1: Largest world religions by percentage adherents of global population<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Data from the Adherents.Com website, where the sources for the various estimates are also provided (Available: [www.adherents.com/Religions\\_By\\_Adherents.html](http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html), accessed 20 June 2009). Included in the "Other" category here are the following groups with over a billion adherents in total: Secular/Nonreligious/Agnostic/Atheist; Chinese traditional; primal-indigenous; African Traditional & Diasporic; Juche (North Korea); Spiritism; Baha'i; Shinto; Cao Dai; Zoroastrianism; Tenrikyo and Neo-Paganism.

Lastly, the methods used in these reports—extracting, summarizing and preliminary analysis—are the first steps in a wider examination of religious approaches to the use of force. Upon this foundation, the variety of interpretations, schools of thought, religious sects, leaders and religio-cultural practices can be added. These reports can serve as a reference source of scriptural passages and thus contribute to the field of comparative religion. Through this modest work, the authors aim to stimulate practical uses and further analysis and discourse on the overlap between religion and the themes of war and peace.

## 2 Buddhism<sup>3</sup>

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The teachings of the Buddha emerged in the sixth century B.C.E., during a period of increased urbanization and developing political formations in the Indian subcontinent. They revolve around escape from human suffering, which is said to characterize our existence in this world of poverty and conflict. The founder, Siddhartha Gautama (sometimes spelled Gotama, also known as the Buddha or “enlightened one”), was the heir to his father’s kingdom, a role which he rejected after renouncing the world, having become troubled after witnessing poverty, sickness, old age and death firsthand. Buddhism quickly expanded beyond North India, penetrating deep into Central, South-East and East Asia. This exposure to a variety of peoples resulted in the emergence of numerous sects, each with its own set of teachings in the form of suttas (sutras).

The religion is fundamentally focused around the liberation of human beings based on spiritual practices, often involving the renunciation and rejection of worldly activities, emotions and goals. However, liberation is also dependent on personal behaviour and practices, including the use and non-use of violence. So the many Buddhist scriptures, with rich examples of the Buddha’s own behaviour, provide excellent targets for analysis in a study on the justifications for armed force. In this work, over a dozen relevant holy texts were identified and summarized.

### 2.1 The Dhammapada

The *Dhammapada* is one of the most popular and important of Buddhist sacred texts. Formally, it belongs to the Pāli *Tipitaka*<sup>4</sup> and comes from the *Theravada* branch of Buddhism. But it is read by many Buddhists from the *Mahayana* and other schools within the religion. The 423 Pali verses are claimed to have been uttered by the Buddha on some 305 occasions.<sup>5</sup>

The version used here is *The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1985), translated from the Pali by respected Buddhist scholar and prolific author Acharya Buddharakkhita<sup>6</sup>, with an Introduction by Bhikkhu Bodhi. It was obtained electronically at

[www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.intro.budd.html](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.intro.budd.html).

Other versions, for comparison, can be found at [www.serve.com/cmtan/Dhammapada](http://www.serve.com/cmtan/Dhammapada) and <http://eawc.evansville.edu/anthology/dhammapada.htm>.

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<sup>3</sup> By A. Walter Dorn and Seth Feldman, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>4</sup> See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhammapada>, accessed 25 February 2008. “Although the Pāli edition is the most well known, a *Gandhari* edition written in *Kharosthi* and a seemingly related text in *Sanskrit* known as the *Udanavarga* have also been discovered.”

<sup>5</sup> See: [www.serve.com/cmtan/Dhammapada](http://www.serve.com/cmtan/Dhammapada), accessed 8 February 2008.

<sup>6</sup> For a list of publications, see [http://books.google.ca/books?as\\_auth=Acharya+Buddharakkhita](http://books.google.ca/books?as_auth=Acharya+Buddharakkhita).

### 2.1.1 Summary<sup>7</sup>

The Dhammapada does not justify violence but condemns it and seeks ways to control it from within the individual. The Dhammapada asserts that the mind, as the “forerunner” of states of consciousness, influences outer conditions. Hence, the “wicked” mind produces suffering and the “pure” mind engenders affection (1.1-2). Thoughts of being abused and beaten foster hatred in oneself and others while thoughts of love will result in the ability to calm quarrels (1.6).

The “Fundamental Moral Code” presented in the Dhammapada includes not harming others (14.185). The text exhorts adherents to “neither strike nor cause to strike” (10.129). In hurting others one “cannot find happiness” (10.131-2). Furthermore, grave punishment (on Earth and in the after world, including Hell) is said to apply to those who inflict violence on the unarmed and the “inoffensive” (10.137-140). This seems to imply that violence against armed or offensive persons does not bring the same level of punishment. The text puts explicit blame on anyone who strikes a “holy man” (26.389). Destroying life is said to be self-harm, like digging up one’s own root (18.146-147). “Self-conquest” or mastery of one’s own emotions, on the other hand, is far greater than conquest in battle (8.103-4), perhaps implying that there is some greatness in battle.

To be worthy of the title of a holy man, ascetic or “recluse,” one must not harm or oppress others (14.184) or give way to any anger (26.389). Such a person must endure without resentment any “abuse, beating and punishment” (26.399). Violence towards “all living beings, weak or strong,” must be renounced. The holy man is “friendly amidst the hostile, peaceful amidst the violent and unattached amidst the attached” (26.405-6). He lives in peace with passions subdued, senses controlled, “laying aside the rod (in his relations) towards all living beings” (10.142). Indeed, the “awakened...disciples of Gautama” delight day and night in harmlessness or *ahimsa* (21.300).

Thus, in the Dhammapada, one cannot find any justification for the use of force. Violence of all forms is proscribed. Only by inference can one interpret any acceptance of violence: firstly, punishment is severe to those who inflict violence on the unarmed and the “inoffensive”, suggesting it is different for other actions (10.137-140); and secondly, conquest in battle may bring some greatness but self-conquest is far greater (8.103-4).

### 2.1.2 Commentary

War is not explicitly dealt with but the implication of the Buddha’s words in the Dhammapada is clear: violence of any kind is counterproductive. However, there does seem to be a gradation of prohibitions. One should not harm the unarmed and the innocent (10.137-140). Violence towards monks, Brahmins, holy men, and other conscientious practitioners of *dhamma* is less acceptable than when violence is aimed against armed combatants, those who commit injustice and those who do not practice dhamma (26.389). However, Holy men are expected to refrain from all forms of violent action, even in self-defence, and are held to a higher standard of restraint than those who do not practice dharma (26.399). A holy man is one who has realized the dhamma as a living principle within himself and is thus compelled by his own nature to follow it. Other dhamma practitioners such as monks, Brahmins, and lay-practitioners may understand the dharma as a set of external rules but are not held to the same standards of self-control as the holy man who has

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<sup>7</sup> Written by A. Walter Dorn.

imbibed it into his nature. Thus, a hierarchy of expectations regarding ahimsa may be observed ranging from the holy man to less advanced students of dhamma to those who are unfamiliar with Buddha's teachings.

## **2.1.3 Extracts from the Dhammapada**

### **2.1.3.1 The nature of mind**

Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts, suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox. Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with a pure mind a person speaks or acts, happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow. (1.1-2)

"He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me." Those who harbor such thoughts do not still their hatred. "He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me." Those who do not harbor such thoughts still their hatred. (1.3-4)

Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is a law eternal. There are those who do not realize that one day we all must die. But those who do realize this settle their quarrels. (1.5-6)

Those who mistake the unessential to be essential and the essential to be unessential, dwelling in wrong thoughts, never arrive at the essential. Those who know the essential to be essential and the unessential to be unessential, dwelling in right thoughts, do arrive at the essential. (1.11-12)

### **2.1.3.2 All beings fear pain and death**

All tremble at **violence**; all fear **death**. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should **not kill** nor cause another to kill. All tremble at violence; **life** is dear to all. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill. (10.129-130)

### **2.1.3.3 The way to happiness**

One who, while himself seeking happiness, **oppresses** with violence other beings who also desire happiness, will **not attain happiness** hereafter. One who, while himself seeking happiness, does not oppress with violence other beings who also desire happiness, will find happiness hereafter. (10.131-2)

### **2.1.3.4 Violence against those who are defenseless**

He who inflicts **violence** on those who are unarmed, and offends those who are inoffensive, will soon come upon one of these **ten states**: Sharp pain, or disaster, bodily injury, serious illness, or derangement of mind, trouble from the government, or grave charges, loss of relatives, or loss of wealth, or houses destroyed by ravaging fire; upon dissolution of the body that ignorant man is born in **hell**. (10.137-140)

### 2.1.3.5 General statements on non-violence

Though one may conquer a thousand times a thousand men in **battle**, yet he indeed is the noblest victor who conquers himself. **Self-conquest** is far better than the conquest of others. (8.103-4)

One who **destroys life**, utters lies, takes what is not given, goes to another man's wife, and is addicted to intoxicating drinks — such a man digs up his own root even in this world. (18.246-247)

Not despising, **not harming**, restraint according to the code of monastic discipline, **moderation** in food, dwelling in solitude, devotion to meditation — this is the teaching of the Buddhas. (14.185)

### 2.1.3.6 Standards of the monk, ascetic and holy man *viz-a-viz* non-violence

Enduring patience is the highest austerity. “Nibbana is supreme,” say the Buddhas. He is not a true monk who **harms** another, nor a true renunciate who **oppresses** others. (14.184)

One should not **strike** a holy man, nor should a holy man, when struck, give way to **anger**. Shame on him who strikes a holy man, and more shame on him who gives way to anger. (26.389)

He who without resentment **endures** abuse, **beating** and punishment; whose power, real might, is patience — him do I call a **holy man**. (26.399)

He who has **renounced violence** towards all living beings, weak or strong, who neither kills nor causes others to kill — him do I call a holy man. He who is **friendly** amidst the hostile, peaceful amidst the violent, and **unattached** amidst the attached — him do I call a holy man. (26.405-6)

Even though he be well-attired, yet if he is posed, calm, controlled and established in the holy life, having set aside **violence** towards all beings — he, truly, is a holy man, a renunciate, a monk. (10.142)

Those disciples of Gotama ever awaken happily whose minds by day and night delight in the practice of **non-violence**. (21.300)

## 2.2 Ashoka's Edicts

### 2.2.1 Background and method

Ashoka (also written Aśoka or Asoka) was an Indian emperor of the Mauryan Dynasty who ruled a large section of India from 273 to 232 BC. After witnessing massive bloodshed in the Kalinga war, which he had waged out of a desire for conquest, Ashoka fully embraced Buddhism in a dramatic conversion. He experienced profound remorse for the suffering caused by his military policies and became the leading exponent of Buddhist principles of non-harm, advocating *Dharmavijaya*, victory by righteousness and truth, in place of military conquest. Despite the fact that his life was mythologized in the *Aśokāvadāna* (“Narrative of Asoka”) of the later 2<sup>nd</sup> century,

the *Divyāvadāna* (“Divine narrative”), and the Sinhalese text *Mahavamsa*, little was known of Ashoka’s actual personality and ideology until European scholars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century began to decipher the Ashokan edicts inscribed on rocks and pillars throughout India by the emperor.

The following edicts were reviewed for any passages relating to the use of force: Fourteen Rock Edicts (FRE), Kalinga Rock Edicts (KRE), Minor Rock Edicts, Seven Pillar Edicts (SPE), Minor Pillar Edicts (MPE).

The chosen translation of the Edicts is by Ven. S. Dhammika (1993)<sup>8</sup> based on Amulyachandra Sen’s 1956 rendering, which also includes the original Magadhi text and a Sanskrit version. The translation is available at [www.urbandharma.org/udharma/asoka.html](http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma/asoka.html).

Passages in the edicts are referenced by providing the edict name in abbreviation and the edict number (e.g., KRE III for third edict of the Kalinga Rock Edicts).

### 2.2.2 Summary

While Ashoka states in his Rock Edicts that “not killing living beings is good” (FRE III), he does not say that killing is prohibited entirely. Rather, “restraint” must be exercised with regards to “the killing and harming of living beings” (FRE IV). “Living beings” would seem to include both animals and humans, and one passage seems to advocate vegetarianism (FRE I).

In a key passage, Ashoka urges his successors to make conquest by Dhamma only (i.e., righteously and non-violently). But if his heirs do seek military conquest, they should do so with “forbearance and light punishment.” Other passages emphasize forgiveness (FRE XIII).

Ashoka deeply regrets the suffering of “Brahmans, ascetics, and householders of different religions” caused by his former military campaigns (FRE XIII). War brings great misfortunes to human beings, especially the innocent who are “injured, killed or separated from their loved ones” (FRE XIII). Ashoka speaks out especially against the harming of those who are practicing some form of religion, whether Buddhism or not.

Regarding justice within his kingdom, Ashoka complains that people are often “imprisoned, treated harshly and even killed” without just cause (KRE I). He therefore exhorts judicial officers to enforce the law with greater fairness and impartiality, suggesting, perhaps, that the incarceration and, in cases of severe criminality, execution of criminals is justified when guilt can be proven.

### 2.2.3 Interpretation and commentaries

Ashoka seeks to create, through his edicts, a more obedient, Dhamma-abiding society. Perhaps as a show of imperial strength, or as a demonstration of the tragedy of conflict, he impresses his readers with the extent of damage done during the savage Kalinga war (FRE XIII) and does not seem to rule out conquest or killing but rather seeks to minimize it. He declares that he has

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<sup>8</sup> Dhammika, Ven S. (1993) *The Edicts of King Ashoka*. Buddhist Publication Society: Kandy, Sri Lanka.

renounced his former ways and seeks to abide by the Dhamma (FRE XIII) so as to experience its rewards on Earth and Heaven, including “great joy.”

Ashoka seems to be engaged in an effort at “norm creation.” He encourages people to abide by Dhamma and states that everywhere people were following the ordinances of his edicts. Ashoka wanted to minimize the use of armed force in his kingdom so it seems he was apparently trying to obtain obedience and non-violence through a softer approach; a moral, normative and spiritual one. He still did indicate that he would have some monitoring and enforcement powers such as sending out Mahamatras or similar persons to verify that the judicial officers are abiding by the laws and not giving people “unjust imprisonment or harsh treatment” (KRE I).

Ashoka advocates “conquest by Dhamma only” as the primary path to be taken by his descendants. This suggests that military forms of conquest should be considered only as a last resort (FRE XIII)

In the *Seven Pillar Edicts*, Ashoka instructs his officials to “protect with Dhamma, to make happiness through Dhamma and to guard with Dhamma” (SPE I). The words “protect” and “guard” may have a military connotation, though these words may also be seen in a non-violent light. How one protects and guards the Dhamma is open to interpretation. One possible interpretation is that Dhamma should be used as a code of conduct outlining the rules of engagement, including with foreign armies. The second is that by abstaining from violence altogether, the kingdom will accrue good karma as a whole and it will thus be spared the affliction of conquest from foreign invaders.

To give some further context, the following passages were taken from the online preface to the edicts by Ven. S. Dhammika:

The Asokan state gave up the predatory foreign policy that had characterized the Mauryan Empire up till then and replaced it with a policy of peaceful co-existence. The judicial system was reformed in order to make it more fair, less harsh and less open to abuse, while those sentenced to death were given a stay of execution to prepare appeals and regular amnesties were given to prisoners.

We have no way of knowing how effective Asoka's reforms were or how long they lasted but we do know that monarchs throughout the ancient Buddhist world were encouraged to look to his style of government as an ideal to be followed. King Asoka has to be credited with the first attempt to develop a Buddhist polity.

## **2.2.4 Extracts from Ashoka’s Edicts**

### **2.2.4.1 Fourteen Rock Edicts**

I. Formerly, in the kitchen of Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi [Alias for Ashoka], hundreds of thousands of **animals were killed** every day to make curry. But now with the writing of this



Dhamma edict only three creatures, two peacocks and a deer are killed, and the deer not always. And in time, not even these three creatures will be killed.

**III.** Respect for mother and father is good, generosity to friends, acquaintances, relatives, Brahmans and ascetics is good, **not killing living beings is good**, moderation in spending and moderation in saving is good. The Council shall notify the Yuktas about the observance of these instructions in these very words.

**IV.** In the past, for many hundreds of years, killing or harming living beings and improper behavior towards relatives, and improper behavior towards Brahmans and ascetics has increased. But now due to Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi's Dhamma practice, the sound of the drum has been replaced by the sound of the Dhamma. The sighting of heavenly cars, auspicious elephants, bodies of fire and other divine sightings has not happened for many hundreds of years. But now because Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi promotes **restraint in the killing and harming of living beings**, proper behavior towards relatives, Brahmans and ascetics, and respect for mother, father and elders, such sightings have increased.

**XIII.** Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, conquered the Kalingas eight years after his coronation. One hundred and fifty thousand were deported, one hundred thousand were killed and many more died (from other causes). After the Kalingas had been conquered, Beloved-of-the-Gods came to feel a **strong inclination towards the Dhamma**, a love for the Dhamma and for instruction in Dhamma. Now Beloved-of-the-Gods feels deep remorse for having conquered the Kalingas.

Indeed, Beloved-of-the-Gods is deeply pained by the killing, dying and deportation that take place when an unconquered country is conquered. But Beloved-of-the-Gods is pained even more by this -- that Brahmans, ascetics, and householders of different religions who live in those countries, and who are respectful to superiors, to mother and father, to elders, and who behave properly and have strong loyalty towards friends, acquaintances, companions, relatives, servants and employees -- that they are **injured, killed or separated** from their loved ones. Even those who are not affected (by all this) suffer when they see friends, acquaintances, companions and relatives affected. These misfortunes befall all (as a result of war), and this pains Beloved-of-the-Gods.

There is no country, except among the Greeks, where these two groups, Brahmans and ascetics, are not found, and there is no country where people are not devoted to one or another religion. Therefore the killing, death or deportation of a hundredth, or even a thousandth part of those who died during the conquest of Kalinga now pains Beloved-of-the-Gods. Now Beloved-of-the-Gods thinks that even those who do wrong should be forgiven where **forgiveness** is possible.

Even the forest people, who live in Beloved-of-the-Gods' domain, are entreated and reasoned with to act properly. They are told that despite his remorse Beloved-of-the-Gods has **the power to punish** them if necessary, so that they should be ashamed of their wrong and not be killed. Truly, Beloved-of-the-Gods desires **non-injury, restraint and impartiality to all beings**, even where **wrong** has been done.

Now it is **conquest by Dhamma** that Beloved-of-the-Gods considers to be the best conquest. And it (conquest by Dhamma) has been won here, on the borders, even six hundred yojanas away .... everywhere people are following Beloved-of-the-Gods' instructions in Dhamma. Even where Beloved-of-the-Gods' envoys have not been, these people too, having heard of the practice of Dhamma and the ordinances and instructions in Dhamma given by Beloved-of-the-Gods, are **following it** and will continue to do so. This conquest has been won everywhere, and it gives great joy -- the **joy which only conquest by Dhamma can give**. But even this joy is of little consequence. Beloved-of-the-Gods considers the great fruit to be experienced in the **next world** to be more important.

I have had this Dhamma edict written so that my sons and great-grandsons may not consider making new conquests, or that **if military conquests are made, that they be done with forbearance and light punishment**, or better still, **that they consider making conquest by Dhamma only**, for that bears fruit in this world and the next. May all their intense devotion be given to this which has a result in this world and the next.

#### 2.2.4.2 Kalinga Rock Edicts

I. You must attend to this matter. While being completely **law-abiding**, some people are imprisoned, treated harshly and even killed without cause so that many people suffer. Therefore your aim should be to act with **impartiality**. It is because of these things -- envy, **anger**, **cruelty**, **hate**, indifference, laziness or tiredness -- that such a thing does not happen. Therefore your aim should be: "May these things not be in me." And the root of this is non-anger and patience. Those who are bored with the administration of justice will not be promoted; (those who are not) will move upwards and be promoted. Whoever among you understands this should say to his colleagues: "See that you do your duty properly. Such and such are Beloved-of-the-Gods' instructions." Great fruit will result from doing your duty, while failing in it will result in gaining neither heaven nor the king's pleasure. Failure in duty on your part will not please me. But done properly, it will win you heaven and you will be discharging your debts to me.

This edict has been written for the following purpose: that the **judicial officers** of the city may strive to do their duty and that the people under them might not suffer **unjust imprisonment or harsh treatment**. ... When these Mahamatras go on tours of inspection each year, then without neglecting their normal duties, they will ascertain if judicial officers are acting according to the king's instructions.

#### 2.2.4.3 Seven Pillar Edicts

I. Beloved-of-the-Gods speaks thus: This Dhamma edict was written twenty-six years after my coronation. **Happiness** in this world and the next is difficult to obtain without much love for the Dhamma, much self-examination, much respect, much fear (of evil), and much enthusiasm. But through my instruction this regard for Dhamma and love of Dhamma has grown day by day, and will continue to grow. And my officers of high, low and middle rank are practicing and conforming to Dhamma, and are capable of inspiring others to do the same. Mahamatras in border areas are doing the same. And these are my instructions: to **protect with Dhamma**, to make happiness through Dhamma and to guard with Dhamma.

IV. ... it is my wish that in this way, even if a prisoner's time is limited, he can prepare for the next world, and that people's Dhamma practice, self-control and generosity may grow.

VII. ... The Dhamma regulations I have given are that various **animals** must be protected. And I have given many other Dhamma regulations also. But it is by **persuasion** that progress among the people through Dhamma has had a greater effect in respect of harmlessness to living beings and non-killing of living beings.

## 2.3 Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta

### 2.3.1 Background and summary

A *sutta* (“discourse” in Pali, *sūtra* in Sanskrit/Hindi) is a record of the Buddha’s words, usually addressed to members of the sangha (monastic community). The *Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta* appears in the *Digha Nikaya* (long discourses), the first division of the *Sutta Pitaka*.<sup>9</sup> The *Sutta Pitaka* is the second of the three divisions that make up the Pali canon, otherwise known as the *Tripitakas*.<sup>10</sup>

In the *Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta*, the Buddha describes the role of the Chakkavatti or “wheel turning monarch” who preserves the harmony and well-being of his kingdom by adhering to a strict code of political *dhamma*. The Buddha tells the story of a new and unwise king who becomes the first in many generations to abandon the “sacred wheel treasure,” symbolic of kingly *dhamma*, opting instead to rule by his own preferences and inclinations, which included violent actions. Problems in the kingdom begin when the king ignores tradition and refuses to give welfare to the poor in his kingdom. This denial causes a citizen to rob his neighbour to obtain what is needed to survive. But instead of punishing this man, the king tries to alleviate his poverty by giving him a piece of land. This plan backfires because it encourages other impoverished citizens to rob their neighbours in hopes of receiving land from the king. Then the king decides to execute a man who had committed robbery in order to set an example. This increases the feeling of helplessness in the kingdom and many disaffected citizens, who feel they have nothing to lose, begin widespread killing and plundering:

Hearing about this, people thought: 'Now let us get sharp swords made for us, and then we can take from anybody what is not given which is called theft, we will make an end of them, finish them off once [and] for all and cut off their heads.' So, having procured some sharp swords, they launched murderous assaults on villages, towns and cities, and went in for highway-robbery, killing their victims by cutting off their heads.

This leads to a vicious cycle of violence. Thus, the misguided king’s decision to disregard Dhamma and the chain of decisions that follow ultimately leads to the ruin of the kingdom and the gradual reduction in the lifespan of human beings due to a descent into decadence and moral corruption.

In the first extract below, the Buddha speaks of an ancient predecessor, King Dalhanemi, whom he portrays as an ideal Cakkavatti, “a righteous monarch of the law” who “conquered the sea-girt land without stick or sword...” Included among the seven treasures possessed by such a righteous king are “the elephant treasure” and “the horse treasure” (which perhaps signify the possession of an army). He is also said to have 1,000 sons who are “conquerors of the hostile army” even as they are prohibited from violence and the use of weapons. The list of duties of the Cakkavatti includes establishing “**guard, ward and protection** according to Dhamma” within the kingdom. The Cakkavatti is given the epithet of “warrior-king” and is said to be possessed of a “fourfold

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<sup>9</sup> See: [www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/dn/index.html](http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/dn/index.html).

<sup>10</sup> See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sutta\\_Pitaka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sutta_Pitaka).

army”.<sup>11</sup> However, the Cakkavatti himself declares: “do not take life.” The Sutta does not attempt to reconcile the existence of armies with the rule not to kill or injure.<sup>12</sup>

Two online copies of the text were used: [tipitaka.wikia.com/wiki/Cakkavattisihanada\\_Sutta](http://tipitaka.wikia.com/wiki/Cakkavattisihanada_Sutta) (the entire sutta can be found on that webpage) and [www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/kelly/warder-key/exercise-18.html](http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/kelly/warder-key/exercise-18.html).

## 2.3.2 Extracts from the Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta

### 2.3.2.1 The possessions and practices of a wheel-turning monarch

“Once, monks, there was a wheel-turning monarch named Dalhanemi, a righteous monarch of the law, conqueror of the four quarters, who had established the security of his realm and was possessed of the seven treasures. These are: the Wheel Treasure, **the Elephant Treasure, the Horse Treasure**, the Jewel Treasure, the Woman Treasure, the Household Treasure, and, as seventh, the Counselor Treasure. He has more than a thousand sons who are heroes, of heroic stature, **conquerors of the hostile army**. He dwells[,] having **conquered this sea-girt land without stick or sword**, by the law.” (Source: [tipitaka.wikia.com/wiki/Cakkavattisihanada\\_Sutta](http://tipitaka.wikia.com/wiki/Cakkavattisihanada_Sutta))

### 2.3.2.2 The duty of a wheel-turning monarch

‘But what, sire, is the duty of an Ariyan wheel-turning monarch?’ ‘It is this, my son: Yourself depending on the Dhamma, honoring it, revering, cherishing it, doing homage to it and venerating it, having the Dhamma as your badge and banner, acknowledging the Dhamma as your master, you should establish **guard, ward and protection** according to Dhamma for your own household, your **troops**, your nobles and vassals, for Brahmins and householders, town and country folk, ascetics and Brahmins, for beasts and birds.

### 2.3.2.3 The wheel-turning monarch prohibits the taking of life

Then, rising from his seat, covering one shoulder with his robe, the King took a gold vessel in his left hand, sprinkled the Wheel with his right hand, and said: ‘May the noble Wheel-Treasure turn, may the noble Wheel-Treasure conquer!’ The Wheel turned to the east, and the King followed it with his **fourfold army**. And in whatever country the Wheel stopped, the King took up residence with his fourfold army. And those who opposed him in the eastern region came and said: ‘Come, Your Majesty, welcome! We are yours, Your Majesty. Rule us, Your Majesty.’ And the King said: ‘**Do not take life**. Do not take what is not given...’

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<sup>11</sup> “The fourfold army is generally taken as horses, elephants, chariots, and foot soldiers...” Referenced online from the Valmiki Ramayana website at [www.valmikiramayana.net/bala/sarga69/bala\\_69\\_frame.htm](http://www.valmikiramayana.net/bala/sarga69/bala_69_frame.htm). The original source of this quote is not known.

<sup>12</sup> In relation to the second extract (“The Duty of a Wheel-turning Monarch”) Elizabeth J. Harris writes of this passage that “the need for an army and consequently for the use of force in defense is accepted as a worldly necessity. But the picture which emerges is not glorification of the ‘just’ war but an appeal for war and violence to be seen against a higher set of values.” Elizabeth J. Harris, “Violence and Disruption in Society: A Study of the Early Buddhist Texts,” originally published in *Dialogue*, New Series Vol. XVII (1990) by The Ecumenical Institute for Study & Dialogue, 490/5 Havelock Road, Colombo 6, Sri Lanka. Reprinted in the *Wheel* series, available at [www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/harris/wheel392.html](http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/harris/wheel392.html).

## 2.4 The Crystal King

The exact origin of this sacred story is unknown. According to contemporary Buddhist Scholar Hirata Seiko, versions of this story can be found in the *Ekottaragama Sutra*, *Vaiduryaya Sutra* and the *Arthavargiya Sutra*.<sup>13</sup> In the version of the story recounted by Seiko, Buddha lies down in the path of the invading Kosala Army and petitions King Virudhaka to give up his campaign of violence against Buddha's kinfolk, the Sakyas. At that time it was tradition that an invading army must retreat if they are petitioned to do so by a holy man. Virudhaka's army returns twice more only to be sent back in deference to Buddha's request. When Buddha receives word that the army is making a fourth advance, he refuses to intervene on the Sakya's behalf, stating that their slaughter by Virudhaka's army was an inevitable outcome resulting from the negative *karma* of the Sakya clan. That earlier part of the story is not included in the passage quoted here.

The source of extracted text is "The Crystal King", in the section "Stories" of the website "Leaves from the Buddha's Grove," [civet-cat.skandinaviskzencenter.org/civet-cat/poetry-stories/crystal-king.htm](http://civet-cat.skandinaviskzencenter.org/civet-cat/poetry-stories/crystal-king.htm). The name of the translator is not given.

### 2.4.1 Summary

The most telling event in this particular story is Buddha's final refusal to act to protect his clansmen, the Sakyas, from their violent fate at the hands of King Virudhaka and the Kosala army. Buddha asserts that their fate is inevitable, stating that "a fixed karma cannot be changed." King Virudhaka seeks vengeance on the Sakyas after he is insulted and humiliated by them. However, we are told that the deeper motivation for his action stems from an event in a previous incarnation wherein members of the Sakya clan, reduced to hunger by a famine, decided to kill some fish swimming in a nearby pond. These same fish have now taken birth in Kosala to punish the Sakyas. At the story's end, however, Virudhaka is "reborn in hell" for his violent actions.

### 2.4.2 Analysis

Buddha's actions in this story pose a fundamental ethical dilemma in violent situations. Buddha's refusal to rescue the Sakyas from certain death based on his assertion that "a fixed Karma cannot be changed," suggests that he is powerless to alter the course of events in favour of his people. However, in some versions of the tale he intervenes three times on behalf of the Sakyas. Similarly, he does not advise them to defend themselves militarily, presumably because to do so would further aggravate their negative karma, the debt for which is to be paid by dying at the hands of King Viruddhakka and his people whom they had harmed in a previous life.

How might Buddha's choice of inaction impact attitudes of practicing Buddhists who are confronted by violent conflict? Even though one version of the story depicts Buddha's repeated exhortation of King Virudhaka to refrain from using force, he ultimately defers to *karma* as an

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<sup>13</sup> See Hirata's article "Zen Buddhist Attitudes to War." Trans. Thomas Kirchner, found at [www.nanzan-u.ac.jp/SHUBUNKEN/publications/nlarc/pdf/Rude%20awakenings/Hirata.pdf](http://www.nanzan-u.ac.jp/SHUBUNKEN/publications/nlarc/pdf/Rude%20awakenings/Hirata.pdf), accessed 21 July 2008.

irreversible law and decides not to act. Should followers refrain from action required for self-preservation, based on the idea that their destruction is a direct manifestation of their past transgressions? If this is true, violent action would only serve to strengthen the power of that karma. This suggests that non-violent action is the correct choice.

### 2.4.3 Extracts from The Crystal King

During the generation that preceded Shakyamuni Buddha's life on earth, many of his Shakya clansmen were brutally massacred by the wicked king, Virudhaka, the so-called "Crystal King." Why did this terrible event occur?

Well, it so happened that near Kapila, the Shakya city in which the Buddha was born, there was a large pond and, on the shore of that pond, there was a small village. Nobody remembers the name of the village. One year a great drought occurred. The crops withered and the villagers couldn't think of anything else to do but **kill** and eat the fish that lived in the pond. They caught every fish except one. This last fish was captured by a boy who played with the wretched creature by **bouncing it on its head**. That's what he was doing when the villagers took it from him and killed it. Then the rains came again and everywhere in the kingdom life returned to normal. People got married and had children. One of those children was Siddhartha, the Buddha [in a previous birth], who was born in the city of Kapila, near that village and pond.

Siddhartha grew up and preached the Dharma, gaining many followers. Among these followers was the King of Shravasti, King Prasenajit. This King married a Shakya girl and the two of them produced a son: Prince Virudhaka, the "Crystal One". The royal couple decided to raise the Prince in Kapila, the Buddha's city.

At first, everything was fine. Prince Virudhaka was a healthy baby and before long he grew into a nice strong boy. But before he was even ready to start school, a momentous event occurred. It happened that one day, during the Buddha's absence from Kapila, the young prince climbed up onto the Buddha's Honored Chair and began to play there. He meant no harm—he was just a child playing. But Oh!—when the Buddha's clansmen saw the prince playing in this sacred place they became very angry and reprimanded the prince and dragged him down from the chair, humiliating and punishing him. How can a child understand the foolishness of zealots? Adults can't figure it out. It's really quite mysterious. Their harsh treatment served only to embitter the prince and to cause him to hate all his Shakya clansmen. It was their harsh treatment that started him on his career of cruelty and vengeance.

Eventually, the prince, by killing his own father, it is said, was able to ascend the throne of Shravasti. Now, as King Virudhaka, the Crystal King, he was finally able to take revenge against the Shakya clan. Leading his own **soldiers**, he began to **attack** the city of Kapila.

When the Buddha's clansmen came to tell him about the impending **massacre**, they found him suffering from a terrible headache. They begged him to intervene and rescue the people of Kapila from the Crystal King's brutal attack, but the Buddha, groaning in pain, refused to help. "**A fixed Karma cannot be changed**," he said.

The clansmen then turned to Maudgalyayana, one of the Buddha's most powerful disciples, and begged for his assistance. He listened to their sad complaint, and moved to pity, decided to assist the besieged citizens of Kapila. Using his supernatural abilities, Maudgalyayana extended his miraculous bowl to the threatened Shakya and allowed five hundred of them to climb into it. Then he raised the bowl high in the air, thinking that he had lifted them to safety. But when he again lowered the bowl, the five hundred men had turned into a pool of blood.

The dreadful sight so alarmed everyone that the Buddha decided to disclose the story of his ancestors, those villagers who had killed all the fish during the drought. "This marauding army of **soldiers** that are now **attacking** Kapila had been those fish," he explained. "The people of Kapila who are now being massacred were the people who killed those fish. The Crystal King, himself, was that last big fish. And who, do you think," the Buddha asked, holding a cold cloth against his forehead, "was the boy who bounced that fish on its head?"

So, for **killing** the fish, the people suffered death. And for hurting that fish's head, the Buddha was now plagued with an awful headache. And what about Virudhaka, the Crystal King? Naturally, he was **reborn in Hell**.

## 2.5 The Dhajagga Sutta or "The Top of the Standard"

This Sutta appears in the third of the five Nikayas (collections) in the Sutta Pitaka, entitled the [Samyutta Nikaya](#) ("grouped discourses"). It has been cited as an endorsement for the use of force though the passage is less than decisive on this question.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.5.1 Summary

Buddha relates a story to the sangha in which Sakka, lord of the devas (demigods) and commander of the deva army, advises thirty-three devas in his army that by gazing at his standard [flag] they can overcome their fear while engaged in battle. He also tells them that the same objective can be achieved by looking at the standards of the deva-kings Prajapati, Varuna, and Isana. Buddha advises that for those who gaze at the standards of these gods, "any fear, terror, or horripilation they may have might be abandoned, or it might not." He explains further that by recollecting the person of the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, the monks can definitely overcome any fears they may be experiencing. While the gods are still themselves susceptible to fear and passion, the "Tathagata [Buddha], worthy and rightly self-awakened, is free of passion, free of aversion, free of delusion. He is fearless, cannot be terrorized, bold, not quick to flee."

Source: This extract was translated from Pali into English by Thanissaro Bhikkhu and was found at [www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn11/sn11.003.than.html](http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn11/sn11.003.than.html), 27 September 2008.

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14 Bartholomeusz, Tessa J. *In Defense of Dharma*. Routledge, 2002.

### 2.5.2 Extracts from the Dhajagga Sutta

The Blessed One said: "Once, monks, the devas & asuras were arrayed for **battle**. Then Sakka, **lord of the devas**, addressed the devas of the Thirty-three: 'If, dear sirs, when the devas are engaged in battle, there should arise fear, terror, or horripilation, then on that occasion you should look up at the top of my standard. For when you look up at the top of my standard, any fear, terror, or horripilation you may have will be abandoned. ....

"Monks, in those who look up at the top of the standard of Sakka, lord of the devas; in those who look up at the top of the standard of Pajapati the deva-king; in those who look up at the top of the standard of Varuna, the deva-king; or in those who look up at the top of the standard of Isana, the deva-king, any **fear, terror, or horripilation they may have might be abandoned, or it might not**. Why is that? Because Sakka, lord of the devas, is not free of passion, free of aversion, or free of delusion. He can be frightened, terrorized, cowardly, quick to flee.

"But, monks, I tell you this: If, when you have gone to the wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, there should arise **fear, terror, or horripilation**, then on that occasion you should **recollect** me thus: 'Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge & conduct, well-gone, knower of the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of those who can be tamed, teacher of devas and human beings, awakened, blessed.' **For when you recollect me, monks, any fear, terror, or horripilation you may have will be abandoned.**

"If you don't recollect me, then you should recollect the Dhamma thus: 'The Dhamma is well expounded by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting one to come & see, pertinent, to be seen by the wise for themselves.' For when you recollect the Dhamma, monks, any fear, terror, or horripilation you may have will be abandoned.

"If you cannot recollect the Dhamma, then you should recollect the Sangha thus: 'The Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples who have practiced well, practiced straightforwardly, practiced methodically, practiced masterfully, i. e., the four pairs, the eight-types [of Noble Ones]: that is the Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples — worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of respect, the unexcelled field of merit for the world.' For when you recollect the Sangha, monks, any fear, terror, or horripilation you may have will be abandoned.

"Why is that? Because the Tathagata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, is free of passion, free of aversion, free of delusion. He is fearless, cannot be terrorized, bold, not quick to flee."

## 2.6 Mahaparinibbana Sutta (Pali)

The Mahaparinibbana (Maha-pari-nibanna) Sutta is the longest of the 34 *Digha Nikaya* (collection of long verses) *suttas*. Originally written in the Pali language, the text recounts the last days of Gautama Buddha's life in which he reiterates his essential teachings to his followers.

The text is thus a distillation of the main teachings already given in other Suttas.<sup>15</sup>

This Theravada text, unlike its Mahayana counterpart entitled *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, does not contain any passages supporting violent action. The Mahayana version, on the other hand, advocates suspending the five precepts and using force to defend *dharma* when it is threatened.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> [www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html) (see introduction).

<sup>16</sup> To view examples of passages advocating violence in the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* see the extract dealing with that text in this collection.



The source of the scripture is the translation by Sister Vajira and Francis Story. Last Days of the Buddha: The Maha-parinibbana Sutta (revised edition). Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1998, accessed electronically at [www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html)

The following search terms were used to scan the entire sutta with the number of hits: violence (0), sword (0), soldier (0), army (0), attack (0), kill (4, none relevant), fight (0), harm (1, 1 relevant), battle (1, 1 relevant), dhamma (80, none relevant). No relevant passages were found outside the one quoted here.

### 2.6.1 Summary

This passage is taken from the opening of the Sutta. In it, the Magadha king, Ajatasattu, wishing to wage war on the Vajjis, sends the Brahmin Vassakara to approach the Tathagata (Gautama Buddha), in order to request his insight on the matter of war.<sup>17</sup> Upon being asked the question, Gautama turns to his disciple Ananda and poses a series of enquiries regarding his knowledge of the conduct of the Vajjis. He questions Ananda on seven conditions of Dhamma. When he is told that the Vajjis uphold each of the seven conditions, he responds thus: "So long, Ananda, as this is the case, the growth of the Vajjis is to be expected, not their decline." Notably, the Buddha does not advocate self-defense or any military response on the part of the Vajjis, but merely asserts that their prosperity will result from their adherence to dhamma.

### 2.6.2 Extracts from the Mahaparinibbana Sutta

3. "Very well, sire," said the brahman Vassakara in assent to Ajatasattu, king of Magadha. And he ordered a large number of magnificent carriages to be made ready, mounted one himself, and accompanied by the rest, drove out to Rajagaha towards Vultures' Peak. He went by carriage as far as the carriage could go, then dismounting, he approached the Blessed One on foot. After exchanging courteous greetings with the Blessed One, together with many pleasant words, he sat down at one side and addressed the Blessed One thus: "Venerable Gotama, Ajatasattu, the king of Magadha, pays homage at the feet of the Venerable Gotama and wishes him good health, strength, ease, vigour, and comfort. He desires to wage war against the Vajjis, and he has spoken in this fashion: 'These Vajjis, powerful and glorious as they are, I shall annihilate them, I shall make them perish, I shall utterly **destroy** them.'"

[Conditions of a Nation's Welfare]

4. At that time the Venerable Ananda [foremost disciple of the Buddha] was standing behind the Blessed One, fanning him, and the Blessed One addressed the Venerable Ananda thus: "What have you heard, Ananda: do the Vajjis have frequent gatherings, and are their meetings well attended?"

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<sup>17</sup> The episode depicting the hostility of King Ajatasattu towards the Vajjis in the *Maha-parinibbana Sutta* is identified as relevant to the theme of **non-violence** by James A. Strobble in his essay *Buddhism and War: A Study of the Status of Violence in Early Buddhism* which can be found at [www2.hawaii.edu/~strobble/Buddhism\\_and\\_War.html](http://www2.hawaii.edu/~strobble/Buddhism_and_War.html).

"I have heard, Lord, that this is so."

"So long, Ananda, as this is the case, the growth of the Vajjis is to be expected, not their decline.

"What have you heard, Ananda: do the Vajjis assemble and disperse **peacefully** and attend to their affairs in concord?"

"I have heard, Lord, that they do."

"So long, Ananda, as this is the case, the growth of the Vajjis is to be expected, not their decline.

"What have you heard, Ananda: do the Vajjis neither enact new decrees nor abolish existing ones, but proceed in accordance with their ancient constitutions?"

"I have heard, Lord, that they do."

"So long, Ananda, as this is the case, the growth of the Vajjis is to be expected, not their decline.

"What have you heard, Ananda: do the Vajjis show respect, **honor**, esteem, and veneration towards their elders and think it worthwhile to listen to them?"

"I have heard, Lord, that they do."

"So long, Ananda, as this is the case, the growth of the Vajjis is to be expected, not their decline.

"What have you heard, Ananda: do the Vajjis refrain from abducting women and maidens of good families and from detaining them?"

"I have heard, Lord, that they refrain from doing so."

"So long, Ananda, as this is the case, the growth of the Vajjis is to be expected, not their decline.

"What have you heard, Ananda: do the Vajjis show respect, honor, esteem, and veneration towards their **shrines**, both those within the city and those outside it, and do not deprive them of the due **offerings** as given and made to them formerly?"

"I have heard, Lord, that they do venerate their shrines, and that they do not deprive them of their offerings."

"So long, Ananda, as this is the case, the growth of the Vajjis is to be expected, not their decline.

"What have you heard, Ananda: do the Vajjis duly **protect and guard the arahats**, so that those who have not come to the realm yet might do so, and those who have already come might live there in **peace**?"

"I have heard, Lord, that they do."

"So long, Ananda, as this is the case, the growth of the Vajjis is to be expected, not their decline."

5. And the Blessed One addressed the brahman Vassakara in these words: "Once, brahman, I dwelt at Vesali, at the Sarandada shrine, and there it was that I taught the Vajjis these seven conditions leading to (a nation's) welfare. So long, brahman, as these endure among the Vajjis, and the Vajjis are known for it, their growth is to be expected, not their decline."

## 2.7 The Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra

The Mahāparinirvāna (Maha-pari-nirvana) Sutra is a Mahayana Buddhist text not to be confused with its Theravada counterpart, the Mahāparinibbana Sutta, which was composed in Pali. The text is considered among the most important of Buddha's teachings in the Mahayana tradition. It narrates the final days of Buddha's life during which time Buddha offered a final explanation of his teachings.

Source used: "The Mahayana Mahāparinirvāna Sutra," translated into English by Kosho Yamamoto. Edited, revised and copyrighted by Dr. Tony Page (Nirvana Publications, London,

1999-2000). Original source: [www.nirvanasutra.org.uk, d.scribd.com/docs/1has9zmgvtvbl7q9ph33.pdf](http://www.nirvanasutra.org.uk/d.scribd.com/docs/1has9zmgvtvbl7q9ph33.pdf), obtained from

### 2.7.1 Summary

Is killing ever justified in Buddhism? Apparently so. In the first extract Buddha tells the story of how in a previous incarnation he himself took the life of a Brahmin. He explains that he killed the man “out of love” and not with an “evil mind.” He also mentions the need to apply “kindly lashes” to persons who slander the *dharma* (*dhmma* in Pali) in order to teach them a lesson. By taking the life of such a person the Buddha performs a remedial action so that such a person will learn to act in accordance with the law in future lives. The Buddha also tells of how the Brahmin was reborn in hell and that this birth in a realm of suffering made him realize that he had caused his own fate by slandering the *dharma*. In his next incarnation he was reborn in the world of the Tathagata Amrta-Drum, a heavenly world of the enlightened, where he lived for 10 kalpas (thousands of years). The extract ends with the following statement: “I thus, in days gone by, gave this person a life of 10 kalpas. How could it be said that I killed him?”

The second extract is short and can be quoted here in its entirety: “O good man! One who upholds Wonderful Dharma does not receive the five precepts and practice deportment, but protects with the sword, bow, arrow, and halberd those bhiksus [monks] who uphold the precepts and who are pure.” Buddha directs this advice specifically to his lay-followers.

In the third extract Buddha narrates a story in which a group of bhikus take up weapons and turn against the Dharma. The Dharma and sangha are defended from these renegades by a king named “Virtuous” whom we are later told was an earlier incarnation of Buddha. King Virtuous is described as an “unsurpassed utensil of Dharma.” King Virtuous dies from wounds sustained while staving off the renegades and is reborn in the realm of the Buddha Akshobhya. After narrating this tale, Buddha tells his listeners that “at the time when Wonderful Dharma is about to die out, one should act and protect Dharma like this.” Buddha also instructs the laity to take up “sword and staff” to protect the Dharma and says that those who follow the five precepts when Dharma needs to be protected are not true Mahayana practitioners. The passage ends when Buddha tells his listeners that “You may possess the sword and staff, but do not take life.” Despite the inherent contradiction of this statement, the Buddha calls this “upholding the precepts.”

In the final extract below, Buddha states that for those who draw the sword and kill without the intention of killing “the karmic consequence will be light and not heavy.” So, the Just War criteria of Right Intent as well as Net Benefit can be said to apply, albeit over a long period of time (many incarnations), given the Buddha’s first story of the killing of a Brahmin.

## 2.7.2 Extracts from the Mahaparinirvana Sutra

### 2.7.2.1 The benevolent killing of a Brahmin

O good man! A person who is not indolent regarding Dharma gains a long life. When the Bodhisattva-mahasattva practises the prajnaparamita [perfected Wisdom], he urges all beings to practise all kinds of good dharmas [things] and is not indolent. Having thus practised, beings in consequence gains a long life. For this reason, when the Bodhisattva practises the prajnaparamita, he already bestows on beings unlimited life. O good man! Because of this, the **Bodhisattva-mahasattva does not take the lives of any being to the end**. "O good man! You asked if one could gain this "bhumi" or not when one has **killed a Brahmin**. O good man! I already gained it. **Out of love, I took his life**. It was not done with an evil mind. O good man! For example, a father and mother have an only son. They love him greatly and act against the law. At that time, the father and mother, out of fear, drive one away or **kill**. Though they drove [him] away or killed [him], they had **no evil mind**. In just the same way, the Bodhisattva-mahasattva acts likewise for reasons of protecting Wonderful Dharma. Should beings slander Mahayana, he applies **kindly lashings**, in order to cure them. Or he may take life in order that what [was] obtained in the past could be mended, thus seeing to it that the law [Dharma] could be accorded with. The Bodhisattva always thinks: "How might I best make beings aspire to faith? I shall always act as is best fitted to the occasion." The Brahmin fell into Avichi Hell after his death. ... thought [then] arose: "Through what causal concatenations have I been born here?" He then came to realise that things had taken this turn because of his slandering of the vaipulya Mahayana sutras and by his not believing, and by his being killed by the king – thus had he been born there. Thinking in this way, respect arose towards the Mahayana vaipulya sutras. Then, after his death, he was born in the world of Tathagata Amrta-Drum. There he lived for 10 kalpas. O good man! I thus, in days gone by, gave this person a life of 10 kalpas. How could it be said that I **killed him?**"

### 2.7.2.2 On the use of Force to protect Dharma

O good man! One who upholds Wonderful Dharma **does not receive the five precepts** and practise deportment, but **protects** with the **sword, bow, arrow, and halberd** those bhiksus who uphold the precepts and who are pure.

### 2.7.2.3 The benevolent offensive of "King Virtuous"

At that time there were many bhiksus who were acting contrary to the precepts. On hearing this, they entertained ill-will and came upon this bhiksu, brandishing **swords** and **staves**. At that time, there was a king called "**Virtuous**". He heard of this. To protect Dharma, he came to where the bhiksu was delivering his sermons and fought against the evil doers so that the bhiksu did not suffer. The king, however, received **wounds** all over his body. Then the bhiksu, Enlightened-Virtuous, praised the king, saying: "Well done, well done, O King! You are a person who **protects Wonderful Dharma**. In days to come, you will become the **unsurpassed utensil of Dharma**." The king listened to his sermon and rejoiced. Then he died and was born in the land of Buddha Akshobhya and became his foremost disciple. The subjects of this king, his relatives and soldiers were all glad and did not retrogress in their Bodhichitta [resolve to gain Enlightenment]. When the day came to depart the world, they were born in the land of Buddha Akshobhya. At the time when Wonderful Dharma is about to die out, one should act and **protect Dharma** like this. O Kasyapa! **The king at that time**

was I; the bhikṣu who delivered the sermon was Buddha Kasyapa. O Kasyapa! One who **guards Wonderful Dharma** is recompensed with such incalculable fruition. That is why I today adorn my body in various ways and have perfectly achieved the indestructible Dharma-Body."

Bodhisattva Kasyapa further said to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! The eternal body of the Tathagata is one carved in stone, as it were." The Buddha said to Kasyapa: "O good man! For that reason, bhikṣus, bhikṣunis, upasakas, upasikas should all the more make effort and **protect Wonderful Dharma**. The reward for protecting Wonderful Dharma is extremely great and innumerable. O good man! Because of this, those upasakas [lay devotee] who protect Dharma should **take the sword and staff** and protect such a bhikṣu who guards Dharma. Even though a person **upholds the precepts**, we cannot call that person one who upholds Mahayana. Even though a person has not received [in formal ceremony] the five precepts, if he protects Wonderful Dharma, such a one can well be called one of Mahayana. A person who upholds the Wonderful Dharma should take the **sword and staff** and **guard bhikṣus**." Kasyapa said to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! If all bhikṣus are to be accompanied by such upasakas with the **sword and staff**, can we say that they are worthy of the name, or are they unworthy of such? Or is this upholding the precepts or not?" The Buddha said to Kasyapa: "Do not say that such persons are those who transgress the precepts. O good man! After I have entered Nirvana, the world will be evil-ridden and the land devastated, each pillaging the other, and the people will be driven by hunger. At such a time, because of hunger, men may make up their minds, abandon home and enter the Sangha. Such persons are bogus priests. Such, on seeing those persons who are strict in their observance of the precepts, right in their deportment, and pure in their deeds, upholding Wonderful Dharma, will drive such away or **kill** them or cause **harm** to them." Bodhisattva Kasyapa said again to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! How can all such persons upholding the precepts and guarding Wonderful Dharma get into villages and castle towns and teach?" "O good man! That is why I **allow** those who uphold the precepts to be accompanied by the white-clad people [lay people, non-monks] with the **sword and staff**. Although all **kings, ministers, rich lay men [grhapati] and upasakas** may **possess the sword and staff** for **protecting** Dharma, I call this **upholding the precepts**. You may possess the **sword and staff**, "but **do not take life**". If things are thus, we call this first-hand upholding of the precepts

#### 2.7.3.4 The intentionality of violence as related to karma

"Also, next, O good man! Two people have a fight with a sword and staff, cause bodily injury and draw blood, and death results. But if they had no thought [**intention**] of **killing**, the karmic consequence will be light, not heavy. The same is the case [here]. Even in relation to the Tathagata, if a person has no intention of killing [him], the same applies to this action. It is light and is not heavy. The same is the case with the Tathagata. To guide beings in the days to come, he displays karmic consequences.

## 2.8 Mahavamsa of Sri Lanka

The *Mahavamsa* or *Great Chronical* is a poem written in the Pali language depicting the history of Sri Lanka from the reign of King Vijaya of Kalinga (543-540 BCE) through that of King Mahasena (334-361CE). The *Mahavamsa* is an apocryphal epic of the "birth" and subsequent

history of the Sri Lankan nation. While some Sinhalese nationalists proclaim its validity as a historical document, many scholars see it as a quasi-historical myth celebrating the Sinhala Buddhist heritage of Sri Lanka. In the opening chapter, Sri Lanka is anointed as a stronghold of *dhamma* (righteousness) by Gautama Buddha who is said to have visited the island on three occasions and introduced the “true doctrine.” The various sources of the Mahavamsa were compiled into one book in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE by the Buddhist monk Mahathera Mahanama. The text was translated into English by Wilhelm Geiger in 1912.<sup>18</sup> This translation is used here because it is the most commonly recognized English version.

The main search tool for this investigation was an index of battles and wars mentioned in the Mahavamsa, available on the website [lakdiva.org/mahavamsa](http://lakdiva.org/mahavamsa). While the index references approximately two-dozen battles, only half a dozen or so of these suggest, at least potentially, normative values which condone the use of force. These examples are described in the summary section.

### 2.8.1 Storyline Relating to Wars and Fighting

The Mahavamsa contains many stories of righteous Buddhist figures waging war and committing violence in Sri Lanka. Even the Buddha uses terror, though only briefly and followed by compassion, when he visits Sri Lanka.

According to the text, Gautama Buddha (c. 563-483 BCE) established Buddhism in Sri Lanka at the location later called Mahiyangana-thupa. The Buddha is described as a “conqueror,” having by his presence won “Lanka for the faith” (Mahavamsa, ch. 1, para. 5). Before giving the Nagas (indigenous peoples) the true doctrine (*dhamma*), Buddha uses fear as a tool of conversion, calling forth storms, and the like to bring terror to the yakkas and “dread darkness” to expel the Nagas before calling them back and preaching to them the true doctrine (ch. 1).

The Sinhalese King Dutthagamani (reign 161-137 BC)<sup>19</sup> wages war on the Damilas (Tamils) while building the Mahiyangana-thupa, a monument symbolizing the establishment of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. In Dutthagamani’s conquest over the Damilas, the notion of waging war for the sake of bringing about peace is suggested: “the mighty man marching thence down (the river) had conquered seven mighty Damila princes in one day and had established peace.” Dutthagamani justifies the sanctioning of violence by presenting it as a necessary tool for the spreading of Buddhist doctrine: “not for the joy of sovereignty is this toil of mine, my striving (has been) ever to establish the doctrine of the Sambuddha. And even as this is truth may the armour on the body of my soldiers take the colour of fire.” Finally, Dutthagamani regrets the suffering he has caused by the “destruction of millions” in war and is consoled by the arahants (enlightened ones) in the following way:

From this deed arises **no hindrance in thy way to heaven**. Only one and a half human beings have been slain here by thee, O lord of men. The one had come unto the **(three) refuges**, the other had taken on himself the **five precepts**. Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest, not more to be esteemed than

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<sup>18</sup> Wilhelm Geiger (transl.), *The Great Chronicle of Lanka*, Ceylon Government Information Department, Colombo, 1912, web version available at [lakdiva.org/mahavamsa](http://lakdiva.org/mahavamsa).

<sup>19</sup> en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutugamunu, accessed 13 June 2008.

**beasts.** But as for thee, thou wilt bring glory to the doctrine of the Buddha in manifold ways; therefore cast away care from thy heart, O ruler of men!

The chapter ends with a caveat against murdering for the sake of greed and refers to ‘mortality’ as the ultimate murderer.

Another great sovereign, King Asoka of Jambudipa (Greater India, 304–232 BCE) is alleged, according to the Mahavamsa, to have murdered 99 of his brothers for the sake of consolidating his kingdom. Asoka is credited in the text for popularizing *Dhamma* in Sri Lanka. He even sought to assuage his guilt by seeking the council of the *thera* (head of the order of monks). He is told that “there is no resulting guilt without evil intent.” (ch. 5)

The Sambuddha (i.e., Buddha) instructs Sakka, lord of the gods, to protect Vijaya and his 700 followers who are the first humans to land on Sri Lanka, saying that the island will become a stronghold of the Buddhist religion. Sakka appoints the guardianship of the island to a lotus-coloured god who ties a protective thread around the wrists of Vijaya. While blessing Vijaya, the god tells him and his men that there are no men on the island and that there is nothing to fear in the way of danger from enemies. The island turns out to be inhabited by Yakkhas, a race of nature spirits who are hostile to the presence of Vijaya and his men. Vijaya’s army wins the island by slaying the entire race of Yakkhas in battle.

King Pandukabhaya, described in chapter 10 as a ‘virtuous’ prince by the narrative, forms an army and defeats his nine uncles in battle who have been unjustly attempting to murder him since he was a boy. In a subsequent battle he slays the entire host of his uncles’ armies and assumes rulership over the entire island.

King Elara (Chapter 21) instructs his ministers to sever his head from his body when he accidentally damages the *thupa* of the Bikkhus. They reply by instructing that “Injury to another does our Master in no wise allow; make thy peace (with the Bhikkhus) by restoring the *thupa*.”

During the clash between the armies of Dutthagamani and his brother Tissa (chapter 24) many thousands of men are killed. Tissa is portrayed as the villain in this episode for kidnapping their mother and taking unlawful possession of the great warrior-elephant named Kandula. When Tissa is defeated in battle he is forced to flee from his brother and goes into hiding. However, when he repents, Dutthagamani reprimands him and ultimately forgives his crimes. The author of the epic does not chastise the king for waging war against his brother but rather praises his capacity to forgive: “Thus are pious men wont to **appease** an enmity, though heaped up from many causes, even if it be great; what wise man, pondering this, shall not be of **peace-loving** mind toward others?”

## 2.8.2 Extracts from the Mahavamsa

Chapter I ([chap001.html](#))

When the Sambuddha [Gotama Buddha] had died, the *thera* [head of the order of monks] named Sarabhu, disciple of the *thera* Sariputta, by his miraculous power received, even from the funeral pyre, the collar-bone of the **Conqueror** and brought it hither (to Lanka) ... The king Dutthagamani

dwelling there while he made **war upon the Damilas**, built a mantle cetiya over it eighty cubits high. Thus was the **Mahiyangana-thupa** completed. When he had thus made our island **a fit dwelling-place for men**, the mighty ruler, valiant as are **great heroes**, departed for Uruvela [modern Bodhi Gaya, the site in India of the Buddha's enlightenment].

[King Dutthagamani completes the alter to the Sambuddha while making war upon the Damilas]

[The deva Samiddhisumana holds a gathering of branches to shade Buddha from the sun. These branches are then planted by the **gate-rampart** and grow into a Bodhi-Tree. Samiddhisumana is reincarnated into the life of the tree in Lanka.]

Hovering there in mid-air above the **battlefield** the Master [Gotama Buddha], who drives away (spiritual) darkness, called forth **dread darkness** over the nagas [indigenous inhabitants of Sri Lanka]. Then comforting those who were distressed by **terror** he once again spread light abroad. When they saw the Blessed One they joyfully did reverence to the Master's feet. Then preached the **Vanquisher** to them the doctrine that begets concord, and both [nagas] gladly gave up the throne to the Sage. When the Master, having alighted on the earth, had taken his place on a seat there, and had been refreshed with celestial food and drink by the naga-kings, he, the Lord, established in the (three) refuges and in the moral precepts eighty kotis of snake-spirits, dwellers in the ocean and on the mainland.

[Buddha covers the Nagas with darkness and they flee in terror. They are converted when he brings back the light and preaches to them the true doctrine]

#### Chapter V ([chap005.html](#))

Twenty-four years he [Ashoka, Indian emperor] reigned, and his son Bindusāra reigned twenty-eight. A hundred glorious sons and one had Bindusara; Asoka stood high above them all in valour, splendour, might, and wondrous powers. He, when he had **slain his ninety-nine** brothers born of different mothers, won the undivided sovereignty over all Jambudipa. Be it known, that two hundred and eighteen years had passed from the nibana [*sic*] of the Master unto Asoka's consecration.

....  
When the great king, the famed Dhammasoka, was aware of this, he sent a minister to the splendid Asokarama, laying on him this command: 'Go, settle this matter and let the uposatha-festival be carried out by the community of bhikkhus in my arama.' This fool went thither, and when he had called the community of bhikkhus together he announced the king's command: 'Carry out the uposatha-festival.'

'We hold not the uposatha-festival with heretics,' the community of bhikkhus replied to that misguided minister. The minister struck off the head of several theras, one by one, with his sword, saying, 'I will force you to hold the uposathafestival.' When the king's brother, Tissa, saw that crime he came speedily and sat on the seat nearest to the minister. When the minister saw the therā he went to the king and told him (the whole matter).

When the monarch heard it he was troubled and went with all speed and asked the community of bhikkhus, greatly disturbed in mind: 'Who, in truth, is guilty of this deed that has been done?'

And certain of them answered in their ignorance: 'The guilt is thine,' and others said: 'Both of you are guilty'; but those who were wise answered: 'Thou art not guilty.'

When the king heard this be said: 'Is there a bhikkhu who is able to set my doubts to rest and to befriend religion?' 'There is the therā Tissa, the son of Moggali, O king,' answered the brethren to the king. Then was the king filled with zeal.

...



Then the monarch asked the therā [Tissa] whether or not he himself shared the guilt of the murder of the bhikkhus by the minister [who had murdered the theras for refusing to hold the uposatha-festival]. The therā taught the king: '**There is no resulting guilt without evil intent,**' and he recited the Tittira-jataka.

#### Chapter VI ([chap006.html](#))

The arrow struck the lion's forehead but because of his tenderness (toward his son) it rebounded and fell on the earth at the youth's feet. And so it fell out three times, then did the king of beasts grow **wrathful** and the arrow sent at him struck him and **pierced** his body.

#### Chapter VII ([chap007.html#1](#))

WHEN the Guide of the World, having accomplished the salvation of the whole world and having reached the utmost stage of blissful rest, was lying on the bed of his nibbana; in the midst of the great assembly of gods, he, the great sage, the greatest of those who have speech, spoke to Sakka' who stood there near him: 'VIJAYA, son of king Sihabahu, is come to Lanka from the country of Lala, together with seven hundred followers. **In Lanka, O lord of gods, will my religion be established,** therefore carefully **protect him** with his followers and Lanka.

[Gods are requested by Buddha to provide guardianship of Lanka. The lotus-coloured god places protective thread around the wrists of Vijaya and his men]

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As the night went on he [Vijaya] heard the sounds of music and singing, and asked the yakkhini, who was lying near him: 'What means this noise?' And the yakkhini: 'I will bestow kingship on my lord and all the **yakkhas must be slain**, for (else) the yakkhas [**male** nature spirits] will **slay me**, for it was through me that men have taken up their dwelling (in Lanka).'

And she said to the prince: 'Here there is a yakkha-city called Sirisavatthu; the daughter of the chief of the yakkhas who dwells in the city of Lanka has been brought hither, and her mother is to come. And for the wedding there is high festival, lasting seven [*sā*] days; therefore there is this noise, for a great multitude is gathered together. Even today **do thou destroy the yakkhas**, for afterwards it will no longer be possible.'

He replied: 'How can I slay the yakkhas who are invisible?' 'Wheresoever they may be,' she said, 'I will utter cries, and where thou shalt hear that sound, strike! and by my magic **power shall thy weapon fall upon their bodies.**'

Since he listened to her and did even (as she said) he **slew all the yakkhas**, and when he had fought victoriously he himself put on the garments of the yakkha king and bestowed the other raiment on one and another of his followers.

#### Chapter X ([chap010.html#2](#))

He [brahman Pandula] gave him [prince Pandukabhaya] a hundred thousand (pieces of money) to enroll **soldiers** and when five hundred men had been enrolled by him (he said): 'The (woman) at whose touch leaves turn to gold make thou thy queen, and my son Canda thy chaplain.' When he had thus said and given him money he sent him forth from thence with his **soldiers**. Proclaiming his name he, **the virtuous prince**, fared forth and when in the city of Paia near the Kasa-mountain he had gathered together seven hundred followers and provision for all, he went thence, followed by one thousand two hundred men to the mountain called Ginkanda.

And the prince took the maiden and mounted his waggon and fared onward, fearless, and surrounded by a mighty **army**.

When her father heard this he despatched all his **soldiers**, and they came and gave **battle** and returned, defeated by the others; at that place (afterwards) a village was built called Kalahanagara.' When her five brothers heard this they (also) departed to make war. And all those did Canda the son of Pandula slay; Lohitavahakhandha was their battle-field.

With a great host PANDUKABHAYA marched from thence to the further shore of the Ganga toward the Dola-mountain. Here he sojourned four years. When his uncles heard that he was there they marched thither, leaving the king behind, to do **battle** with him. When they had made a fortified camp near the Dhūmarakkha-mountain they **fought a battle with their nephew**. But the nephew pursued the uncles to this side of the river, and having defeated them in flight he held their fortified camp for two years.

And they went to Upatissagama and told all this to the king. And the king sent the prince a letter together with a thousand (pieces of money) saying: '**Keep thou possession of the land on the further shore, but come not over to this shore.**' When the nine brothers heard of this they were wroth with the king and said: 'Long hast thou been, in truth, a helper to him Now dost thou give him the kingdom. For that we will put thee to death.' He yielded up the government to them, and with one accord they appointed their brother named Tissa to be regent.

This safety-giving Abhaya had reigned as king in Upatissagama twenty years.

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And once a certain man saw this beautiful (mare) with her white body and red feet and told the prince: Here is a mare whose appearance is thus and so.

The prince took a noose and came to capture her. When she saw him coming up behind her she fled for fear of his majestic aspect. She fled without rendering herself invisible and he pursued her swiftly as she fled. Seven times in her flight she circled round the pond, and plunging into the Mahaganga and climbing forth again to the shore she fled seven times around the Dhūmarakkha-mountain; and yet three times more she circled round the pond and plunged yet again in the Ganga near the Kacchaka-ford, but there he seized her by the mane and (grasped) a palm-leaf that was floating down the stream; by the effect of his merit this turned into a great sword. He thrust at her with the sword, crying: I will slay thee. And she said to him: **I will conquer the kingdom and give it to thee, lord! Slay me not!** Then he seized her by the neck and boring her nostrils with the point of his sword he secured her thus with a rope; but she followed wheresoever he would.

When the mighty (hero) had gone to the Dhūmarakkha mountain, bestriding the mare, he dwelt there on the Dhūmarakkha-mountain four years. And having marched thence with his force and come to the Arittha-mountain he sojourned there seven years awaiting a **fit time to make war**.

Eight of his uncles, leaving two behind, drew near to the Arittha-mountain in battle array, and when they had laid out a fortified camp near a small city and had placed a commander at the head they surrounded the Arittha-mountain on every side.

After speech with the yakkhini, the prince, according to her cunning counsel, sent in advance a company of his soldiers taking with them kingly apparel and weapons as presents and the message: **Take all this; I will make peace with you.** But as they were lulled to security thinking: 'We will take him prisoner if he comes, he mounted the yakkha-mare and went forth to **battle** at the head of a great host. The yakkhini neighed full loudly and his army, inside and outside (the camp) raised a mighty battle-cry. The prince's men **killed all the soldiers** of the enemy's army and the eight uncles with them, and they raised a **pyramid of skulls**. The commander escaped and fled (for safety) to a thicket; that (same thicket) is therefore called Senapatigumbaka. When the prince saw the pyramid of skulls, where the skulls of his uncles lay uppermost, he said: 'Tis like a heap of gourds; and therefore they named (the place) Labugamaka.

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Ten years after his consecration did PANDUKABHAYA [rule] over the whole of the island of Lanka. With Kalavela and Cittaraja, who were visible (in bodily form) the prince enjoyed his good fortune, he who had yakkhas and bhūtas for friends. Between the king PANDUKABHAYA and Abhaya were seventeen years without a king.

When the ruler of the earth, Pandukabyaha, the intelligent, being thirty-seven years old, had assumed the rule over the kingdom, he reigned full seventy years in fair and wealthy Anurādhapura.

#### Chapter XXI ([chap021.html#6](#))

Two **Damilas**, SENA and GUTTIKA, sons of a freighter who brought horses hither, **conquered the king Sūratissa**, at the head of a great army and reigned both (together) twenty-two years justly. But when ASELA had overpowered them, the son of Mutasiva, the ninth among his brothers, born of the same mother, he ruled for ten years onward from that time in Anurādhapura.

A Damila of noble descent, named ELARA, who came hither from the Chola-country to seize on the kingdom, ruled when he had **overpowered king ASELA**, forty-four years, with even justice toward friend and foe, on occasions of disputes at law.

At the head of his bed he had a bell hung up with a long rope so that those who desired a judgement at law might ring it. The king had only one son and one daughter. When once the son of the ruler was going in a car to the Tissa-tank, he **killed unintentionally a young calf** lying on the road with the mother cow, by driving the wheel over its neck. The cow came and dragged at the bell in bitterness of heart; and the **king caused his son's head to be severed (from his body) with that same wheel**. ...

When the king, who was a protector of tradition, albeit he knew not the peerless virtues of the most precious of the three gems, was going (once) to the Cetiya-mountain to invite the brotherhood of bhikkhus, he caused, as he arrived upon a car, with the point of the yoke on the waggon, an **injury to the thūpa** of the Conqueror at a (certain) spot. The ministers said to him: 'King, the thūpa has been injured by thee.' Though this had come to pass without his intending it, yet the king leaped from his car and flung himself down upon the road with the words: '**Sever my head** also (from the trunk) with the wheel.' They answered him: 'Injury to another does our Master in no wise allow; make thy **peace** (with the bhikkhus) **by restoring the thupa**'; and in order to place (anew) the fifteen stones that had been broken off he spent just fifteen thousand kahapanas.

#### Chapter XXIV ([chap024.html#9](#))

He sent a letter to his brother (asking) for his mother and the elephant. But when after the third time he did not receive them he set forth to **make war** upon him. And between those two there came to pass a great battle in Culanganiyapitthi: fell many thousands of the king's men. The king and his minister Tissa and the mare Dighathunika, those three, took flight; the **prince (Tissa)** pursued them. The bhikkhus created a mountain between the two (brothers). When he (Tissa) saw it he turned about, thinking: 'This is the work of the brotherhood of the bhikkhus.'

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Many thousands of the **prince's men fell there**, fighting in battle, and his great host was scattered. 'By reason of the weakness of my rider one of the female sex has used me contemptuously'; so thought the elephant, and in wrath he rushed upon a tree in order to throw him (Tissa). The prince climbed upon the tree; the elephant went to his master (**Dutthagamani**). And he mounted him and **pursued the fleeing prince**. The prince came to a vihara and fleeing to the cell of the chief therā, he lay down, in fear of his brother, under the bed. The chief therā spread a cloak over the bed, and the king, who followed immediately, asked: 'Where is Tissa?' 'He is not in the bed, great king'; answered the therā. Then the king perceived that he was under the bed, and when he had gone forth he placed sentinels round about the vihara; but they laid the prince upon the bed and covered him over with a garment and four young ascetics, grasping the bed-posts, bore him out as if (they were carrying) a dead bhikkhu. But the king, who perceived that he was being carried forth, said: 'Tissa, upon the head of the guardian genii of our house art thou carried forth; **to tear away anything with violence from the guardian genii of our house is not my custom**. Mayst thou evermore remember the virtue of the guardian genii of our house!' Hereupon the king went to Mahagama, and thither did he bring his mother, whom he greatly revered. Sixty-eight years did the king live, whose heart stood firm in the faith, and he built sixty-eight viharas.

But the prince Tissa, carried forth by the bhikkhus, went thence unrecognized' and came to Dighavapi. The prince said to the therā Godhagatta Tissa: 'I have done ill, sir; I will **make my peace** with my brother'. The therā took Tissa, in the habit of a servitor, and five hundred bhikkhus with him and sought the king out. Leaving the prince above on the stairs the therā entered with the brotherhood. The monarch invited them all to be seated and had rice-milk and other (food) brought (to them). The therā covered his almsbowl, and on the question: 'Wherefore this?' he answered: 'We have I come bringing Tissa with us.' To the question: 'Where is the traitor?' he pointed out the place where he stood. The Viharadevi hurried thither and stood **sheltering her young son**. The king said to the therā: 'It is known to you that we are now also your servants. If you had but sent a samanera of seven years our strife had not taken place (and all had ended) without loss of men.' 'O king, this is the brotherhood's guilt, **the brotherhood will do penance**.'

'You will (first) have (to do) what is due to (guests) arriving. Take the rice-milk and the rest.' With these words he offered the (food) to the brotherhood; and when he had called his brother hither he took his seat with his brother even there in the midst of the brotherhood; and when he had eaten together with him he gave the brotherhood leave to depart. And thither too he sent his brother to direct the work of harvest; and he too, when he had made it known by beat of drum, directed the work of harvest.

Thus are pious men wont to **appease an enmity**, though heaped up from many causes, even if it be great; what wise man, pondering this, shall not be of **peace-loving mind** toward others?

Chapter XXV ([chap025.html#19](http://chap025.html#19))

When the king **Dutthagamani** had provided for his people and had had a **relic** put into his spear, he marched, with chariots, troops and beasts for riders, to Tissamaharama, and when he had shown favour to the brotherhood he said: 'I will go on to the land on the further side of the river to **bring glory to the doctrine**. Give us, that we may treat them with honour, bhikkhus who shall go on with us, since the sight of bhikkhus is blessing and protection for us.' As a penance the brotherhood **allowed him five hundred ascetics**; taking this company of bhikkhus with him the king marched forth, and when he had caused the road in Malaya leading hither to be made ready he mounted the

elephant Kandula and, surrounded by his warriors, he took the field with a mighty host. With the one end yet in Mahagama the train of the army reached to Guttahalaka.

Arriving at Mahiyangana he **overpowered the Damila Chatta**. When he had slain the Damilas in that very place he came then to Ambatitthaka, which had a trench leading from the river, and (conquered) the Damila Tittthamba; fighting the crafty and powerful foe for four months he (finally) overcame him by cunning,' since he placed his mother in his view. When the mighty man marching thence down (the river) had **conquered seven mighty Damila princes in one day and had established peace**, he gave over the **booty** to his troops. Therefore is (the place) called Khemārāma.

In Antarasobbha he **subdued** Mahakotta, in Dona Gavara, in Halakola Issariya, in Nalisobbha Nalika. In Dighabhayagallaka he subdued, in like manner, Dighabhaya; in Kacchatittha, within four months, he subdued Kapisisa. In Kotanagara he subdued Kota, then Halavahanaka, in Vahitta the Damila Vahittha and in Gamani (he subdued) Gamani, in Kumbagama Kumba, in Nandigama Nandika, Khanu in Khanugama but in Tamba and Unnama the two, uncle and nephew, named Tamba and Unnama. Jambu also did he subdue, and each village was named after (its commander).

When the monarch heard (that it was said:) 'Not knowing their own army they slay their own people', he made this solemn declaration: 'Not for the joy of **sovereignty** is this toil of mine, **my striving** (has been) ever to establish the **doctrine of the Sambuddha**. And even as this is truth may the **armour** on the body of my soldiers take the colour of fire.' And now it came to pass even thus.

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Sitting then on the terrace of the royal palace ... he [King Dutthagamani], looking back upon his glorious victory, great though it was, **knew no joy**, remembering that thereby was wrought the **destruction of millions** (of beings).

....

The great king greeted them [eight arahants or highly-realized Buddhist], and when he had invited them to be seated and had done them reverence in many ways he asked the reason of their coming. 'We are sent by the brotherhood at Piyangudipa to comfort thee, O lord of men.'

And thereon the king said again to them: 'How shall there be any comfort for me, O venerable sirs, since by me was caused the **slaughter of a great host numbering millions?**' 'From this deed arises **no hindrance in thy way to heaven. Only one and a half human beings** have been slain here by thee, O lord of men. The one had come unto the **(three) refuges**, the other had taken on himself the **five precepts** Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest, not more to be esteemed than **beasts**. But as for thee, thou wilt bring **glory to the doctrine of the Buddha** in manifold ways; therefore cast away care from thy heart, O ruler of men!'

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Should a man think on the hosts of human beings **murdered for greed** in countless myriads, and should he carefully keep in mind the evil (arising from that), and should he also very carefully keep in mind the **mortality as being the murderer of all**, then will he, in this way, shortly **win freedom** from suffering and a happy condition.

Chapter XXXIII ([chap033.html#31](http://chap033.html#31))

In the fifth month after he was thus anointed king, a young brahman named Tissa, in Rohana, in the city (that was the seat) of his clan, hearkened, fool that he was, to the prophesying of a brahman and became a rebel, and his following waxed great. Seven Damilas landed (at the same time) with their troops in Mahatittha. Then Tissa the brahman and the seven Damilas also sent the king a written message concerning the (handing over of the) parasol. The sagacious king sent a written message to Tissa the **brahman**: '**The kingdom is now thine, conquer thou the Damilas.**' He answered: 'So be it,' and fought a battle with the Damilas, but they **conquered** him.

Thereupon the Damilas made war upon the king; in a battle near Kolambalaka the king was vanquished. (Near the gate of the Tithharama he mounted into his car and fled ...)

#### Chapter XXXIV ([chap034.html#34](#))

But king MAHACULI's second son, named KUTAKANNA TISSA, who had fled from fear of ANULA and had taken the pabbajja returned hither when, in time, he had gathered an army together, and when he had **slain the wicked ANULA** [Sri Lankan Queen] he, the ruler of men, reigned twenty-two years. He built upon the Cetiya-mountain a great building for the uposatha festival and to the east of this building he raised a thupa of stone, and in that same place on the Cetiya-mountain he **planted a bodhi-tree**.

#### Chapter XXXV ([chap035.html#36](#))

One sprung of the Lambakanna (clan), named VASABHA, whose home was in the northern province, served under his uncle, a commander of troops. Since it was declared: 'One named Vasabha shall be king,' the king at that time commanded that all in the island who bore the name of Vasabha should be **slain**. The commander, thinking: 'We must deliver up our Vasabha to the king,' and having taken counsel with his wife (upon the matter) set out early in the morning to go to the king's residence. And the wife, to guard Vasabha carefully who went with him, put betel into his hand but without powdered chalk.

Now when the commander, at the gate of the palace, saw the betel without chalk, he sent him back for chalk. When Vasabha came for the chalk the commander's wife spoke with him secretly, gave him a thousand (pieces of money) and aided him to **take flight**. Vasabha went to the Mahavihara and by the theras there was provided with milk, food and clothes, and when he had again heard from a leper the certain prophecy that he would be king, rejoicing he resolved: 'I will be a rebel' And when he had found men suited (to his purpose) he went, **seizing** in his further course **village by village**, according to the instruction (in the story) of the cake,' to Rohana, and gradually winning the kingdom to himself he advanced, after two years, with the needful **army** and train, towards the capital. When the mighty VASABHA had conquered SUBHARAJA in battle he raised the parasol (of sovereignty) in the capital.

#### Chapter XXXVI ([chap036.html#37](#))

But the brother of KUNCHA NAGA's consort, the commander of troops, SIRI NAGA, became a rebel against the king, and when he was equipped with troops and horses he moved on to the capital and when he, in **battle** with the king's army, had put **king KUNCHA NAGA** to **flight**, victorious he reigned over Lanka nineteen years in splendid Anuradhapura. When the king had placed a parasol on the stately Great Thupa, he had it gilded in admirable and splendid fashion. He built the Lohapasada, keeping it within five stories (height), and he restored the steps to the four entrances leading to the great Bodhi-tree. When he had completed the parasol and the pasada he commanded offerings at the festival (of the consecration); great in **compassion**, he remitted the tribute of families throughout the island.



This king's [Tissa's?] younger brother, known as ABHAYA NAGA, who was the queen's lover, being discovered (in his guilt) took flight for fear of his brother and went with his serving-men to Bhallatittha and as if wroth with him, he had his uncle's hands and feet cut off. And that he might bring about division in the kingdom, he left him behind here and took his most faithful followers with him, showing them the example of the dog, and he himself took ship at the same place and went to the other shore. But the uncle, Subbadeva, went to the king and making as if he were his friend he wrought division in the kingdom. And that he might have knowledge of this, ABHAYA NAGA sent a messenger thither. When Subhadeva saw him he loosened (the earth) round about an areca-palm, with the shaft of his spear, as he walked round (the tree), and when he had made it thus (to hold) but feebly by the roots, he struck it down with his arm; then did he threaten the (messenger), and drove him forth. The messenger went and told this matter to ABHAYA NAGA. And when he knew this, ABHAYA NAGA took many Damilas with him and marched from there against the city to do **battle** with his **brother**. On news of this the king took flight, and, with his consort, mounting a horse he came to Malaya. The younger brother pursued him, and when he had **slain the king** in Malaya, he **returned with the queen** and reigned eight years in the capital as king.

The king set up a vedi of stone round about the great Bodhi-tree, and a pavilion in the courtyard of the Lohapasāda. And obtaining garments of every kind for twice a hundred thousand (pieces of money), he **distributed gifts** of clothing among the brotherhood of bhikkhus on the island.

After ABHAYA NAGA's death, SIRI NAGA II, the son of his brother Tissa, reigned two years in Lanka.

## 2.9 The Temiya Jataka (Mute Prince)

The Jatakas are a collection of Pali birth-tales concerning the Buddha's former lives. These tales, full of moral and spiritual significance, serve to convey to a general audience the essence of Buddha's teachings by capturing the imagination through narrative. In this way they serve a similar role to those of morality tales and saints' lives in the Christian tradition. They emphasize the doctrine of *Samsara* or reincarnation common to Indic religions and provide a depth to the narrative of Buddha's worldly progression that transcends the limitations of a single lifetime, with many lessons to be learned by example about proper behaviour.

It is not certain when these stories were compiled into systematic form. The myriad variations that make up the *Jatakas* number in the thousands. It is generally accepted that their origins are rooted in oral tradition. The *Jatakas* have been classified into two distinct groups: the *abhisambuddha-gāthās* in which Buddha is the teller of the story and gives a preamble describing his reason for telling it; and the *gāthās* which are narrated by the *Bodhisatta* (Bodhisattva in Sanskrit) of that particular incarnation when the story takes place.<sup>20</sup>

The extract was obtained from the text found at [www.buddha-images.com/temiya-jataka.asp](http://www.buddha-images.com/temiya-jataka.asp).

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<sup>20</sup> *The Jātaka, or, Stories of the Buddha's former births*. Cowell, Edward B. (Edward Byles), 1826-1903. Tipiṭaka. Suttapiṭaka. Khuddakanikāya. Jātaka. English Pali Text Society, 1995, 1895. 7 v. in 3. Accessed at the "Sacred Texts" website 27 September 2008 at [www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j1/j1001.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/j1/j1001.htm).

### 2.9.1 Summary

This Jataka, “The Mute Prince,” tells the story of the prince Temiya, a bodhisattva and former incarnation of Buddha, who pretends to be mute in order to avoid inheriting the throne of Benares. Temiya is horrified when, at the age of one, he sees his father punish and execute a group of robbers. He then concludes: “A king acts as judge, and so he must perform cruel actions every day. By condemning men to death or torture, he will however himself be condemned to hell.” This experience reawakens a memory of a previous life in which Temiya had been the King of the same area (Benares). During his reign he was forced to make “dread decisions” for which he accumulated negative karma and had to spend “eighty thousand years in hell” in order to atone for his actions as king. He thus decides to become mute so that he will not become king and repeat this experience. The story would seem to indicate that avoidance of doing violence is proper, even if it means renouncing one’s responsibility.

### 2.9.2 Extract

When Temiya was only one month old, he was dressed up for his first public appearance and brought to the throne of his father to sit on his knee. Many courtiers admired his beauty and murmured their approval. Four robbers were then brought before the king to be judged. Temiya witnessed his father[’s] sentence[:] one robber to a thousand strokes from thorn-baited **whips**, another to imprisonment in **chains**, a third to **death** by the spear, and a fourth to death by impaling. The infant Bodhisatta was terrified at his father’s apparent cruelty and thought to himself, “A king acts as judge, and so he must perform **cruel actions every day**. By condemning men to death or torture, he will however **himself be condemned to hell**.”

The next day, awakening from a short nap and looking up at the great white umbrella above him, the infant began to think of what it would mean to be king. These thoughts alarmed him, even more so as he remembered a previous existence in which he himself had reigned as king of Benares for twenty years. As a result of dread[ful] decisions forced upon him in the position of king, he had had to suffer **eighty thousand years in hell**. Now he was destined to become king again in the same city, again to suffer the same fate. This was more than he could bear. As he wondered if escape was possible, a goddess dwelling in the umbrella above him, who had been his mother in a former life, spoke to him:

“Temi my child, let me help you. You must do as I advise: Pretend to be a crippled **mute**. Don’t move your limbs or use your voice. Then the people will refuse to crown you king and you shall be free.”

## 2.10 Upayakausalya Sutra

The Upayakausalya Sutra is a work of the early Mahayana school dating perhaps from the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C., although scholars are uncertain. The value is that it provides a rare example of the Buddha resorting to murder, though in a previous incarnation. He is described as acting with “skill in means.” He does this as a “lesser evil.”



In this Sutra, the Buddha addresses a gathering of both monastics and householders, including elders of the monastic community and Bodhisattvas. According to Mark Tatz, the sutra addresses two main issues: “(1) the introduction of ‘skill in means’ into the fabric of Buddhist ethical life, and (2) dispelling misinterpretations of the nature of the historical Buddha.”

The source of the text (and the quote above) is Tatz, Mark (trans.). The Skill in Means (Upayakausalya) Sutra. Delhi: Jainendra Press, 1994, 73-74.

### 2.10.1 Storyline

This episode is taken from the third chapter of the sutra entitled *The Ten Karmic Connections*. The Buddha relates an incident that befell him during a former incarnation in which he was a ship’s captain named *Great Compassionate*. On this occasion five-hundred merchants in search of wealth are on board the ship. While asleep, Great Compassionate is visited in his dreams by the deities of the ocean who inform him that among the ship’s company is a robber who intends to slaughter the five-hundred merchants and steal their wealth. These deities explain that, since all five-hundred are potential Bodhisattvas, the negative karma accrued by the robber would cause him to “burn in the great hells for as long as it takes for each one of these Bodhisattvas to achieve supreme, right and full awakening, consecutively...” They instruct him to think of some skill in means to prevent this robber from suffering such a punishment. Great Compassionate then decides that even though he should “burn in the great hells for one hundred-thousand eons because of it,” he will kill this robber in order to rescue him from the suffering he will face for killing the five-hundred, thus acquiring for himself the negative karmic debt and consequent suffering. The episode ends with the statement that the fate of the ship’s captain (the future Buddha) should not be viewed as negative karma resulting from past deeds but as a form of skill in means.

### 2.10.2 Extract from the Upayakausalya Sutra

Then the lord again addressed the Bodhisattva Jnanottara: “Son of the family [Bodhisattva Jnanottara]: Once upon a time, long before the Thus-Come-One, the Worthy, the fully perfected Buddha Dipamkara, there were five hundred merchants who set sail on the high seas in search of wealth. Among the company was a doer of dark deeds, a doer of evil deeds, a robber well-trained in the art of **weaponry**, who had come on board that very ship to attack them.

He thought, ‘I will kill all these merchants when they have achieved their aims and done what they set out to do, take all possessions and go to Jambu Continent.’

“Son of the family: Then the merchants achieved their aims and set about to depart. No sooner had they done so, then that deceitful person thought:

“Now I will **kill all these merchants**, take all their possessions and go to Jambu continent. The time has come.”

“At the same time, among the company on board was a captain named Great Compassionate. While Captain Great Compassionate slept on one occasion, the deities who dwelt in that ocean showed him this in a dream:

“Among the ship’s company is a person named so and so, of such and such sort of physique, of such and such garb, complexion, and shape – a robber, mischievous, a thief of others’ property. He is thinking, ‘I will kill all these merchants, take all their possessions and go [to] the Jambu Continent.’ To **kill** these merchants would create formidable **evil karma** for that person. Why so? These five hundred merchants are all progressing toward **supreme, right and full**

**awakening**; they are each irreversible from awakening. If he should kill these Bodhisattvas, the fault – the obstacle caused by the deed – would cause him to burn in the great hells for as long as it takes to each one of these Bodhisattvas to achieve supreme, right and full awakening, consecutively. Therefore, Captain, think of some skill in means to prevent this person from killing the five hundred merchants and going to the great hells because of the deed.’

“Son of the family: Then the captain Great Compassionate awoke. He considered what means there might be to **prevent** that person from killing the five hundred merchants and going to the great hells. Seven days passed with a wind averse to sailing to Jambu Continent. During those seven days he plunged into deep thought without speaking to anyone.

“He thought, ‘There is **no means** to prevent this man from **slaying** the merchants and going to the **great hells** but to **kill him**.’

“And he thought, ‘If I were to report this to the merchants, they would kill and **slay him with angry thoughts** and all go to the **great hells** themselves.’

“And he thought, ‘If I were to kill this person, I would likewise burn in the great hells for one hundred-thousand eons because of it. Yet **I can bear to experience [the] pain of the great hells**, that this person [will] not slay these five hundred merchants and develop so much evil karma. I will kill this person myself.’

“Son of the family: Accordingly, the captain Great Compassionate protected those five hundred merchants and protected that person from going to the great hells by deliberately **stabbing** and slaying that person who was a robber with a **spear**, with great **compassion and skill in means**. And all among the company achieved their aims and each went to his own city.

“Son of the family: At that time, in that life I was none other than the captain Great Compassionate. Have no second thoughts or doubt on this point. The five hundred merchants on board are the five hundred Bodhisattvas who are to nirvanize [realize?] to supreme, right and full awakening in this eon.

“Son of the family: From me, samsara was curtailed for one hundred-thousand eons because of that skill in means and great compassion. And the robber died to be reborn in a world of paradise. The five hundred merchants on board are the five hundred future Buddhas of the auspicious eon.

“Son of the family, what do you think of this? Can curtailing birth and death for one hundred-thousand eons with that skill in means and the great compassion with the gnosis of skill in means be regarded as the Bodhisattva’s obstacle caused by past deeds? Do not view it in that way. That should be regarded as his very skill in means.”

## References

Tatz, Mark (trans.). The Skill in Means (Upayakausalya) Sutra. Delhi: Jainendra Press, 1994.

## 2.11 Vanijja Sutta

The Vanijja Sutta is drawn from the *Anguttara Nikaya*, the fourth division of the *Sutta Pitaka*, the portion of the *Tipitakas* comprising a collection of discourses of the Buddha and a small group of his closest disciples, expounding the Buddha’s essential teachings.<sup>21</sup> The following passage is the entire *Vanijja Sutta* which lists five prohibitions for the livelihood of lay disciples, one of which is “business in weapons.”

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<sup>21</sup> See: [www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka](http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka).

Source: Translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, derived from an previously unpublished file provided by the translator on the site "Access to Insight" at [www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.177.than.html](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.177.than.html)

### **2.11.1 Extract from the Vanijja Sutta**

"Monks, a lay follower should **not engage** in five types of business. Which five? Business in **weapons**, business in human beings, business in meat, business in intoxicants, and business in poison. These are the five types of business that a lay follower should not engage in."

### 3 Hinduism<sup>22</sup>

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Hinduism's roots extend into India's ancient past. Its oldest text, the Rg Veda, was compiled sometime around 1500 BCE. Even older elements of the tradition originate from the ancient Indus Valley Civilization (flourishing circa 2600-1900 BCE). Given its vast history and diversity of present manifestations, the "moving target" of Hinduism has long evaded consensus definition. To further confound attempts at intellectual scrutiny, the tradition (or, as some would argue, group of traditions) known today as "Hinduism" is composed of oral transmission, esoteric teachings, and an utter openness to a wide array of life philosophies. For the sake of convention, the label of Hinduism is used to refer to this wide variety of philosophies, theologies and religious sects originating from modern day India, save, of course, for religious phenomena falling under the categories of Buddhism, Jainism, or Sikhism. Accordingly, the rules on warfare and violence vary among eras and sects. Traditionally, Hinduism promotes a society based on caste, including the warrior caste (kṣatriya). It thus provides rich guidance and anecdotal teachings pertaining to the ethics of warfar. Many of the Hindu scriptures describe battles and suggest proper conduct for the use of force. The great epics Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata feature enormous battles, which some regard as the climax of those epic tales. It is in those monumental battles that the forces of evil are destroyed, whereby the welfare of the world is secured.

*Note:* The English transliteration of Sanskrit terms (which proliferate in Hindu discourse) require diacritical markings which is not readable in Word without special fonts. In order to read the diacritical marks in this chapter as a Word document, download the "Times Norman" fonts which is available at a "Transliteration Fonts for PC Users" website, at <http://lca.wisc.edu/~gbuhnema/pcfonts.html>. Readers of pdf versions of this document will not have this problem.

#### 3.1 Arthaśāstra of Kautilya

Śāstra (often anglicized as shastra) is the Sanskrit word for education or knowledge.<sup>23</sup> Śāstra is also used to mean a treatise or text written and is often found as a suffix in connection with specific fields, e.g., Dharma (moral or righteous) Śāstra, Kāma (pleasure) Śāstra, Mokṣa (liberation) Śāstra and Ārtha (wealth) Śāstra. Artha is translated simply as "wealth" but, in the context of this Śāstra, it means more: the livelihood of people. The text itself says it deals with "the science by which territory [wealth] is acquired" (Book 15).

The Arthaśātra is not a "holy book" *per se*, though it is considered a classic Hindu text and it makes reference to Hinduism's earlier sacred texts, the Vedas. It can be considered a "religious text" because of its interconnectedness with the larger religious literature. Hence, it is included in this work.

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<sup>22</sup> by Raj Balkaran and A. Walter Dorn, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>23</sup> śastra (with short 'a', as opposed to ṣāstra containing the lengthened 'a') is a Sanskrit word denoting **weapon**.

Like the other classic of Kautilya (aka Cāṇakya or Viṣṇugupta, c. 350-283 BC), the Niti-śāstra, the Arthaśāstra emphasizes self-interest and national aggrandizement, leading some to call the author an “Indian Machiavelli.”<sup>24</sup> Similar to *realpolitik* thinkers appearing many centuries later in the West, he emphasizes the primacy of power, the value of preemptive attack, stealth, spies and assassins. He advocates the use of poison against “the wicked.” He advocates surrender to more powerful kings (XII, Ch 1).

Kautilya was likely the Guru (mentor) of Chandragupta (322–293 BCE) and possibly his prime minister. Chandragupta, grandfather of Emperor Aśoka (see *Edicts of Aśoka* in the Buddhism chapter), was king of Magadha and founder of the great Maurya Empire.

The Arthaśāstra is made up of 15 separate books, ranging from ten to over 100 pages each. The extracts presented here are taken from the first English translation, written by:

R. Shamasastri (1915), Government Press, Bangalore, India, found at

[www.bharatadesam.com/literature/kautilya\\_arthashastra/arthashastra.php](http://www.bharatadesam.com/literature/kautilya_arthashastra/arthashastra.php).<sup>25</sup>

For referencing passages, the following format was used: (Book #.Chapter#.Paragraph/line #, though the paragraph/line # is not always given).

The Arthaśāstra was searched electronically using keywords, including some of the following: army, attack, conqueror, dangers, enemies, fight, force, invader, kill, power, profit, rival, strategic, strength, strike, success, traitors, troubles, wealth, weapons, etc.

### 3.1.1 Summary

The ruler/warrior caste is charged with the protection of life (I.III.12), whose natural duty is to fight (XII.1). In a contradictory phrase, non-violence (ahimsa) is said to be a duty of all people, including warriors (I.IV.2). The ruler should mete out only just and appropriate punishment. An attack on the kingdom is punishable by death (V.VI). If war and peace are equal, peace is preferable taking into account the disadvantages of war, such as the “loss of power and wealth, sojourning, and sin” (VII.II). Peace agreements should be made with equal and superior kings and inferior kings should be attacked (VII.III). So the army should “ever be ready to strike his enemy's army when the latter is under troubles” (VIII.5). But rather than demonstrate bravery in war, a weak king should surrender to a more powerful one or seek the protection of an even more powerful one or maintain himself in an impregnable fort (XII.1). The text advocates the use of hidden assassins (XIII.2) and the use of mantras, drugs, and magical performances to “protect one's own people and hurt those of the enemy” (XIV.3). In other Hindu texts, these methods are proscribed to the honourable warrior.

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<sup>24</sup> Gowen, Herbert H. (1929). ‘The Indian Machiavelli’ or Political Theory in India Two Thousand Years Ago, *Political Science Quarterly* 44 (2), p.173-192.

<sup>25</sup> Another notable version (not used here) is Kautilya, “The Arthashastra,” L.N. Rangarajan (ed.), Penguin Classics, New Delhi, 1987 (868 pp) and [www.mssu.edu/projectsouthasia/history/primarydocs/Arthashastra](http://www.mssu.edu/projectsouthasia/history/primarydocs/Arthashastra)

### 3.1.2 Extracts from the Arthaśāstra

#### BOOK I (“Concerning Discipline”)

(Ch I) As the triple Vedas definitely determine the respective duties of the four castes and of the four orders of religious life, they are the most useful. (I.III.5) That of a Kṣatriya is study, performance of sacrifice, giving gifts, **military occupation, and protection of life**. (I.III.12) **Harmlessness** (*abhinā*), truthfulness, purity, freedom from spite, abstinence from cruelty, and forgiveness are duties common to all. (I.IV.2)

That scepter on which the well-being and progress of the sciences of Anvikshaki, the triple Vedas, and Varta depend is known as Daṇḍa (**punishment**). That which treats of Daṇḍa is the law of punishment or science of government. (I.IV.5) ... for whoever imposes **severe punishment** becomes repulsive to the people; while he who awards mild punishment becomes contemptible. But whoever imposes **punishment as deserved** becomes respectable.

(I.VI.7) Rāvaṇa unwilling under the influence of **vanity** to restore a stranger's wife [in the *Rāmāyaṇa*], as well as Duryodhana [in the *Mahābhārata*] to part with a portion of his kingdom; Dambhodbhava as well as Arjuna of Haihaya dynasty being so haughty as to despise all people;

(I.XIII.5) "People suffering from anarchy as illustrated by the proverbial tendency of a large fish swallowing a small one (*matsyanyāyābhibhūtah prajāh*), first elected Manu, the Vaivasvata, to be their king; and allotted one-sixth of the grains grown and one-tenth of merchandise as sovereign dues. Fed by this payment, kings took upon themselves the responsibility of maintaining the **safety and security of their subjects** (*yogakshemavahāh*), and of being answerable for the sins of their subjects when the principle of levying just punishments and taxes has been violated.

(I.XVI.7) Having obtained permission, he shall enter into the capital of the enemy and state the object of the mission as exactly as entrusted to him even at the cost of his own life.

#### BOOK V (“The Conduct of Courtiers”)

(V.VI) In case of the king's demise in an enemy's land, the minister, having brought about an agreement between the enemy and a friend pretending to be an enemy of the dead king, may withdraw himself; or having installed in the king's fort any one of the neighbouring kings, he may withdraw himself; or having installed the heir-apparent, he may **set the army against the enemy**; and when attacked by the enemy, he may take, as detailed elsewhere, such measures as can ward off dangers. ... Whoever **attacks** the kingdom may be put to death under the plea of disturbance and annoyance to the people;

#### BOOK VII (“The End of the Six-Fold Policy”)

(VII.II) When the **advantages** derivable from **peace and war** are of equal character, one should **prefer peace**; for disadvantages, such as the loss of power and wealth, sojourning, and sin, are ever-attending upon war.

(VII.III) Agreements of peace shall be made with equal and superior kings; and an inferior king shall be **attacked**.

#### BOOK VIII ("Concerning Vices and Calamities")

(VIII.5) He (the king) should ever carefully guard his army from the troubles caused by an enemy, and should ever be ready to **strike his enemy's** army when the latter is under troubles.

#### BOOK X ("Relating to War")

(X.3) As to an open or fair fight, a virtuous king should call his army together, and, specifying the place and time of battle, address them thus: "I am a paid servant like yourselves; this country is to be enjoyed (by me) together with you; you have to **strike the enemy** specified by me."

#### BOOK XII ("Concerning a Powerful Enemy")

(XII.5) Contrivances to kill the enemy may be formed in those places of worship and visit, which the enemy, under the influence of faith, frequents on occasions of worshipping gods, and of pilgrimage.

(XII.1) When a king of poor resources is attacked by a powerful enemy, he should **surrender** himself together with his sons to the enemy and live like a reed (in the midst of a current of water). Bhāradvāja [diacritics?] says that he who surrenders himself to the strong, bows down before Indra (the god of rain). But Visālāksha [diacritics?] says that a weak king should rather fight with all his resources, for **bravery destroys all troubles**; this (fighting) is the **natural duty** of a Kṣatriya, no matter whether he **achieves victory or sustains defeat** in battle.

No, says Kautilya, he who bows down to all like a crab on the banks (of a river) lives in despair; whoever goes with his small army to fight perishes like a man attempting to cross the sea without a boat. Hence, **a weak king should either seek the protection of a powerful king or maintain himself in an impregnable fort.**

#### Book XIII ("Strategic Means to Capture a Fortress")

(XIII.2) When the enemy is in the habit of paying frequent visits to ascetics, altars, sacred pillars (stūpa), and images of gods, **spies** hidden in underground chambers or in subterranean passages, or inside the walls, may **strike** him down.

#### Book XIV ("Secret Means")

(XIV.3) By the power of mantras, drugs, and other magical performances, one should **protect one's own people** and **hurt those of the enemy**.

## 3.2 The Bhāgavad Gītā

The translation chosen for this extracting and summarizing project was the one by Sri A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Although this is not the most rigorous scholarly translation of

the original Sanskrit, it is the translation consulted by a large number of Hindu practitioners, both within and without the ISKON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) movement of which Prabhupada is the founder.

Reference used: *Bhāgavad-Gītā As It Is* by Sri A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, [www.bhagavad-gita.us](http://www.bhagavad-gita.us) accessed December 2007 (An advanced search of the Gītā is available at [www.bhagavad-gita.us/search](http://www.bhagavad-gita.us/search)). Other translations are also available online.<sup>26</sup>

A secondary source for our analysis was the book by Stephen Rosen, *Holy War: Violence and the Bhāgavad-Gītā*, Deepak Heritage Books: Hampton, 2002.

The scripture was reviewed in print and electronically to find relevant extracts. For the latter, the following search terms were used: assault; attack\*; battl\*; conflict\*; defen\*; fight\*; force\*; harm\*; inflict\*; injur\*; kill\*; slain; slay\*; strik\*; violen\*; war\*; weapon\*; wound\*.

### 3.2.1 Introduction

The *Bhagavad Gītā* is one of the most widely referenced and most revered scriptures in Hinduism. It is the dialogue, occurring just prior to a battle, between a reluctant warrior, Arjuna, and his charioteer *Kṛṣṇa* (pronounced and often written as Krishna) who is revealed to be an *avatār*, i.e., a direct incarnation of the god *Viṣṇu*.

The Bhagavad Gītā, also known as the *Gītāpaniṣad*, is commonly viewed as an independent text, but it is in actuality a segment of the Bhīṣma-pārvaṇ (chapters 23-40) of the monumental Sanskrit epic, the Mahābhārata. The epic itself was composed over many centuries, probably from 500-200 BCE. There is no certain year of composition for the *Gītā* itself, although many scholars feel that it was composed as a separate entity and later worked into the epic.<sup>27</sup> The *Gītā*'s elegant 700 verses (divided into 18 chapters) are composed primarily in *anuṣṭubh* meter, the standard Indic octameter conforming to a specific sequence of heavy (guru) and light (laghu) syllables.

The entire work unfolds as a conversation between Arjuna, one of the *Mahābhārata*'s great heroes, and *Kṛṣṇa*, who is the ultimate truth-giver. The conversation occurs on a battlefield at the onset of the epic's climactic war, prompted by Arjuna's uncharacteristic despondency, born of a moral conflict about whether to fight. Arjuna's family members and respected elders are among the enemy. Arjuna wonders: Is there a cause virtuous enough to justify the slaying of one's family and teachers? In response, *Kṛṣṇa* leads Arjuna through various branches of Indic thought in order to ease Arjuna's ethical tension. The *Gītā*'s topics range from cosmology and metaphysics to matters of social conduct. As such, the *Gītā* is widely referred to for the sake of moral praxis and spiritual aspiration throughout the Hindu world.

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<sup>26</sup> The Edwin Arnold translation (1885) can be found at [www.sacred-texts.com/hin/gita](http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/gita). Online the *Bhagavad Gita As It Is* of A.C. Bhaktivedanta can also be found at Vedabase.net/bg, accessed 16 May 2008.

<sup>27</sup> See, for instance: Minor, Robert Neil, ed., *Modern Indian Interpreters of the Bhagavad Gita*, SUNY Religious Studies, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, 1986, p.3.



The Gītā has been the object of intense referencing, interpretation, critique, and commentary by many prominent Indian thinkers and leaders throughout the centuries. For instance, the most prominent teacher of Advaita Vedanta, Shankara (788-820 CE), and many prominent 20<sup>th</sup>-century Hindu ideologues, including, Sri Aurobindo (*Essays on the Gītā*), M.K. Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak (*Gītā Rahasya*) have rendered detailed interpretations of the Bhāgavad Gītā.<sup>28</sup> The version used here is from A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who provides a detailed purport in addition to a parsing and translation of the original Sanskrit. Swami Prabhupada did much to raise awareness of the Bhāgavad Gītā in the West, emphasizing the importance of *bhakti* (devotion) in the interpretation. However, the scripture had succeeded in capturing even the attention of earlier Western thinkers, including Emerson, Thoreau, Einstein and Huxley. The Gītā has been invoked through the ages for a variety of military, social and spiritual goals.<sup>29</sup> As such, it is vital to explore the Gītā to understand if and when the use of violent force is justified in and by Hinduism.

### 3.2.1.1 The Gītā and the Use of Force

Many Hindus, including Gandhi, consider this sacred scripture as a metaphor for the inner battle that occurs within each person.<sup>30</sup> For them, Kṛṣṇa represents the enlightened aspect of humanity, while Arjuna represents human failings and vices, including confusion, doubt, fear, guilt, etc. Many Hindus do not consider the Gītā as a source of advice on how to conduct an actual outer war but only as guidance on how to conduct a fulfilling inner life. But its verses have also been taken by many as revealing the warrior's code of conduct.

At four points in the Gītā, non-violence (*ahimsā*) is cited as a virtue.<sup>31</sup> But the majority of the text provides a clear call to action (i.e., fighting). The Gītā has been used at many times in Indian history to justify and support political leaders and soldiers who are about to launch into actual battle.<sup>32</sup> There are many passages in the text that can be used to justify fighting. In fact, the main discourse is aimed at encouraging Arjuna to engage in battle and unambiguously explains why

<sup>28</sup> See, again: Minor, *Modern Indian Interpreters*. Chapters 3 (Tilak), 4 (Sri Aurobindo), 5 (Gandhi), 7 (Swami Vivekananda), 8 (Radhakrishnan), 9 (Sivananda). In the concluding chapter, Robert N. Minor writes (p.222): “Most of these interpreters use the allegorical method to interpret the battle, thereby preserving the Gita as a document that teaches *ahimsa*. For these thinkers *ahimsa* is a positive spirit of loving aid to all creatures, not merely non-injury.”

<sup>29</sup> A passage of the Gita (11:32) was even quoted by Robert Oppenheimer, the chief atomic scientist of the Manhattan Project, after he witnessed the first nuclear explosion.

<sup>30</sup> In the introduction of his Gujarati translation of the *Gita*, Gandhi wrote, “Let it be granted that according to the *Gita* it is possible that warfare is consistent with renunciation of fruit [of action]. But after 40 years’ unremitting Endeavour fully to enforce the teaching of the *Gita* in my own life, I have in all humility felt that the perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of *ahimsa* in every shape and form.” Nevertheless Gandhi also wrote: “If he [Arjuna] leaves the field, what would happen to those vast numbers on his side? If Arjuna went away, leaving them behind, would the Kauravas have mercy on them? No. If he left the battle, the Pandava army would be simply annihilated. What, then, would be the plight of their wives and children?...Arjuna, therefore, had no choice but to fight.” Gandhi, Mohandas K., *The Bhagavad Gita According to Gandhi*, John Strohmeier (ed.), Berkeley Hills Books, Berkeley 2000, p.34.

<sup>31</sup> 10.5, 13.7, 16.2, 17.14. (The extracts are provided below in section 4.)

<sup>32</sup> For example, Indian independence leaders Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) and Subhas Chandra Bose (Netaji) (1897-1945) invoked the Gita in their call to arms.

force is necessary. Indeed, Kṛṣṇa uses a large set of arguments to justify force. These can be grouped under the following categories:

1. Criticisms of Arjuna's despondency and reluctance to fight
2. Arjuna's caste duty as a warrior
3. Superiority of action over inaction
4. Virtue of disinterested action
5. Nature of the Guṇas
6. Human agency nullified by divine agency
7. Indestructibility of the Soul
8. Non-violence as a general virtue.

The relevant extracts are provided after the summary.

### 3.2.2 Summary<sup>33</sup>

In the Bhāgavad Gītā, Kṛṣṇa offers a series of arguments to convince Arjuna that he should fight against those arrayed on the battlefield against him, including Arjuna's close relatives, teachers and friends. The arguments are made on many levels: personal, social, moral and spiritual. The arguments are wide-ranging, including: caste duty and following the divine plan of the transcendental Being. Kṛṣṇa issues dire warnings against desertion and suggests great rewards for fighting. In the climax, Kṛṣṇa manifests himself in a Cosmic Form as an avatār (direct descent of Viṣṇu, the ultimate Reality). The following summary of Kṛṣṇa's reasons why Arjuna should fight (though he himself has promised not to fight) uses words taken mostly from the scripture itself.

Kṛṣṇa begins by noting that Arjuna's despondency is not "befitting" such a great warrior as he. Arjuna should not yield to "degrading impotence" and "petty weakness of heart."<sup>34</sup> Arjuna asks for instruction and justification<sup>35</sup>: why should he fight his kin and other people who are worthy of his worship?

Providing first a social argument, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna he has a duty to fight because he is of the warrior caste (kṣatriya).<sup>36</sup> As such, he should embody the nature and characteristics of the caste,<sup>37</sup> which include heroism, leadership, determination and courage in battle.<sup>38</sup> Being born into this occupation, Arjuna should engage in violence despite any personal qualms about it.<sup>39</sup> In fact, Kṛṣṇa says there is no better engagement for a kṣatriya than "fighting on religious principles."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Written by A. Walter Dorn.

<sup>34</sup> 2.2.-2.3

<sup>35</sup> 2.7

<sup>36</sup> 2.31. Srila Prabhupada describes origins of the term Kshatriya: "Ksat means hurt. One who gives protection from harm is called kshatriya (trayate—to give protection)," [www.bhagavad-gita.us/articles/590/1/Bhagavad-Gita-231](http://www.bhagavad-gita.us/articles/590/1/Bhagavad-Gita-231), accessed 24 March 2008.

<sup>37</sup> 18.41

<sup>38</sup> 18.43

<sup>39</sup> 18.47-18.48.

<sup>40</sup> 2.31, "dharmyat" (from religious principles) and "yuddhat" (fighting); other translators use the expression "righteous war"

On a personal level, Kṛṣṇa advises his dear friend Arjuna that if he fails to perform his duty, he would lose his great reputation as a warrior.<sup>41</sup> His colleagues would consider him cowardly, thinking of him as someone driven by fear from the battlefield.<sup>42</sup> His enemies would scorn him for his inability, something most painful for a proud *kṣatriya*.<sup>43</sup> He would be rendered insignificant<sup>44</sup> and would fall into a dishonour “worse than death.”<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, if a *kṣatriya* fights then spiritual rewards will follow. If killed, the “doors of the heavenly planets” are open to him.<sup>46</sup> Alternatively, if Arjuna survives, he will “conquer and enjoy the earthly kingdom.”<sup>47</sup> Later Kṛṣṇa adds that Arjuna will win glory, vanquish his enemies and enjoy a flourishing kingdom.<sup>48</sup>

In general, Kṛṣṇa describes how action is superior to inaction: inaction does not lead to perfection<sup>49</sup> and it is, in any case, impossible not to act.<sup>50</sup> Rather, performance of prescribed duty<sup>51</sup> is best, while performance of another’s duty is dangerous.<sup>52</sup> Kṛṣṇa cites himself, who need not work, as someone who chooses to be engaged in duties.<sup>53</sup> The learned act for the sake of “leading people on the right path.”<sup>54</sup> But while acting, it is important to be without attachment to the fruits of one’s labour.<sup>55</sup> By sacrificing the results of one’s actions, the doer becomes “cleansed of sinful reactions” and he moves toward the “supreme eternal atmosphere.”<sup>56</sup> One who is unattached to the material world yet remains fully situated in transcendental knowledge attains the “spiritual kingdom.”<sup>57</sup>

In taking action, one must be “devoid of desire for sense gratification.”<sup>58</sup> Through abandonment of the sense of self-importance and possession, the yogi is ever satisfied and independent as he “performs no fruitive action, although engaged in all kinds of undertakings.”<sup>59</sup> He is “steady in both success and failure,” not seeking material reward.<sup>60</sup> “Fight for the sake of fighting,” without considering “victory or defeat,” Kṛṣṇa urges.<sup>61</sup> Even the tragedy of battle seems to be immaterial to Kṛṣṇa.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> 2.33

<sup>42</sup> 2.35

<sup>43</sup> 2.36

<sup>44</sup> 2.35

<sup>45</sup> 2.34

<sup>46</sup> 2.32; see also 2.37

<sup>47</sup> 2.37

<sup>48</sup> 11.33-34

<sup>49</sup> 3.4

<sup>50</sup> 3.9

<sup>51</sup> 3.8

<sup>52</sup> 3.35

<sup>53</sup> 3.22

<sup>54</sup> 3.25

<sup>55</sup> 3.19

<sup>56</sup> 4.30-4.31

<sup>57</sup> 4.23-4.24

<sup>58</sup> 4.19

<sup>59</sup> 4.21-22(*emphasis added*)

<sup>60</sup> 4.22

<sup>61</sup> 2.38

<sup>62</sup> Author’s own comment.

Kṛṣṇa argues that, spiritually speaking, there is no reason to grieve the dead.<sup>63</sup> Human death is inevitable and the soul will reincarnate in a new body.<sup>64</sup> The souls of the persons on the battlefield are eternal<sup>65</sup> and indestructible.<sup>66</sup> Weapons cannot harm the soul.<sup>67</sup> Because the body must come to an end<sup>68</sup> and the soul does not, Arjuna should not lament his unavoidable task<sup>69</sup> but rise to fight his foes.<sup>70</sup>

In fact, Arjuna is a mere instrument, slaying people who are already destined to be slain. Kṛṣṇa reveals to Arjuna that he is, in fact, an incarnation of the divine. The purpose of his incarnation on Earth is to “deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion.”<sup>71</sup>

At Arjuna’s request, Kṛṣṇa shows his companion his universal form.<sup>72</sup> This spectacular vision includes “hundreds of thousands of varied divine and multicolored forms.”<sup>73</sup> It encompasses “everything, moving and nonmoving.”<sup>74</sup> The cosmic vision is of unlimited mouths, unlimited eyes and unlimited wonders.<sup>75</sup> The effulgence of the “Supreme Person” is greater than “hundreds of thousands of suns.”<sup>76</sup> The cosmic form is “decorated with celestial ornaments and bearing many divine upraised weapons,”<sup>77</sup> including “various crowns, clubs and discs.”<sup>78</sup>

The vision then turns frightful yet still powerfully divine.<sup>79</sup> Arjuna sees the hosts of demigods entering into the cosmic form.<sup>80</sup> The cosmic person has many terrible teeth,<sup>81</sup> gaping mouths, glowing eyes<sup>82</sup> and blazing deathlike faces.<sup>83</sup> All the kings and warriors on the battlefield are rushing into the fearsome mouths.<sup>84</sup> Some are “trapped with heads smashed between teeth.”<sup>85</sup> Like rivers flowing into the ocean, or like moths “dashing to destruction in a blazing fire” so all

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<sup>63</sup> 2.11

<sup>64</sup> 2.13; see also 2.27

<sup>65</sup> 2.12

<sup>66</sup> 2.17

<sup>67</sup> 2.23

<sup>68</sup> 2.27, see also 1.28.

<sup>69</sup> 2.26-27

<sup>70</sup> 2.18

<sup>71</sup> 4.8. Another translation is as follows: “For the protection of the good and for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of righteousness I am born from age to age.” Illustrated Srimad Bhagavad Gita, India.

<sup>72</sup> 11.3

<sup>73</sup> 11.5

<sup>74</sup> 11.7

<sup>75</sup> 11.10-11

<sup>76</sup> 11.12

<sup>77</sup> 11.10-11

<sup>78</sup> 11.17

<sup>79</sup> 11.25

<sup>80</sup> 11.21

<sup>81</sup> 11.23

<sup>82</sup> 11.24

<sup>83</sup> 11.25

<sup>84</sup> 11.26-27

<sup>85</sup> 11.27

the great warriors are entering into the multifarious divine mouths.<sup>86</sup> The cosmic form also manifests “terrible, scorching rays.”<sup>87</sup> Arjuna recognizes the form as Vishnu, the “primal Lord.” He offers his obeisances and begs to know more about this fierce form and its great mission.<sup>88</sup>

The cosmic form then declares: “Time I am, the great destroyer of the worlds and I have come here to destroy all people.”<sup>89</sup> All the soldiers, with the exception of Arjuna and his brothers, will be slain.<sup>90</sup> Arjuna is fighting merely as “an instrument” since the soldiers “are already put to death by My arrangement.”<sup>91</sup> So Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to kill without being disturbed.<sup>92</sup>

Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to simply depend upon Him and work always under His protection, being fully conscious of Him.<sup>93</sup> By relying on divine grace, Arjuna can overcome all the obstacles of “conditioned life.”<sup>94</sup> Without such consciousness, Arjuna will be acting through “false ego” and will be lost.<sup>95</sup> Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to surrender to the divine<sup>96</sup> and dispel the illusion that is causing him to decline Kṛṣṇa’s direction.<sup>97</sup> Through surrender and grace, Arjuna “will attain transcendental peace and the supreme and eternal abode.”<sup>98</sup>

Finally, Arjuna declares that his “illusion is now gone.” He is “now firm and free from doubt” and “prepared to act according to Your instructions.” Arjuna has found his courage and is ready to take up his bow and carry out the request of his charioteer, the hidden God, to engage his opponents. He is now ready to abide by Kṛṣṇa’s earlier command: “Armed with yoga, O Bharata, stand and fight.”<sup>99</sup>

The writing is literally a clear call to arms. But there are a few indications that it might be metaphorical. In several places, the Bhāgavad-Gītā seems to advocate non-violence (ahimsā) by including it among a list of virtues.<sup>100</sup>

### **3.2.3 Extracts from the Bhāgavad Gītā**

#### **3.2.3.1 Criticisms of Arjuna’s despondency** (mostly from Chapter 2 of the Bhāgavad-Gītā)

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<sup>86</sup> 11.28-29.

<sup>87</sup> 11.30

<sup>88</sup> 11.31

<sup>89</sup> 11.32

<sup>90</sup> 11.33

<sup>91</sup> 11.34

<sup>92</sup> 11.34

<sup>93</sup> 18.57

<sup>94</sup> 18.58

<sup>95</sup> 18.58

<sup>96</sup> 18.62

<sup>97</sup> 18.60

<sup>98</sup> 18.62, see also 4.39.

<sup>99</sup> 4.42

<sup>100</sup> 10.45, 13.8-12, 16.1-3 and 17.14.

(2.2) The Supreme Personality of Godhead [Kṛṣṇa] said: My dear Arjuna, how have these impurities come upon you? They are not at all befitting a man who knows the value of life. They lead not to higher planets but to **infamy**. (2.3) O son of Pritha, do not yield to this degrading **impotence**. It does not become you. Give up such petty **weakness** of heart and arise, O chastiser of the enemy. (2.4) Arjuna said: O killer of enemies, O killer of Madhu, how can I counterattack with arrows in battle men like Bhishma and Drona, who are worthy of my worship? (2.5) It would be better to live in this world by begging than to live at the **cost of the lives** of great souls who are my **teachers**. Even though desiring worldly gain, they are **superiors**. If they are killed, everything we enjoy will be tainted with **blood**. (2.6) Nor do we know which is better—conquering them or being conquered by them. If we killed the sons of Dhritarashtra, we should not care to live. Yet they are now standing before us on the battlefield. (2.7) Now I am **confused** about my duty and have lost all composure because of miserly **weakness**. In this condition I am asking You to tell me for certain what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please **instruct** me.

### 3.2.3.2 **Caste (kṣatriya) duty and reputation** (mostly from Chapter 2)

(2.31) Considering your specific **duty as a kshatriya**, you should know that there is no better engagement for you than **fighting on religious principles**; and so there is no need for hesitation. (2.32) O Pārtha, happy are the kshatriyas to whom such fighting **opportunities** come unsought, opening for them the doors of the heavenly planets. (2.33) If, however, you do not perform your religious duty of fighting, then you will certainly incur **sins** for neglecting your duties and thus lose your **reputation** as a fighter. (2.34) People will always speak of your infamy, and for a respectable person, **dishonor** is worse than death. (2.35) The great generals who have highly esteemed your name and fame will think that you have left the battlefield out of fear only, and thus they will consider you **insignificant**. (2.36) Your enemies will describe you in many unkind words and **scorn** your ability. What could be more painful for you? (2.37) O son of Kunti, either you will be killed on the battlefield and **attain the heavenly planets**, or you will **conquer and enjoy** the earthly kingdom. Therefore get up and fight with **determination**.

### 3.2.3.3 **Nature of the Gunas (tendencies)** (mostly from Chapter 18)

(18.41) Brahmanas, **kshatriyas**, vaishyas and shudras are distinguished by the qualities born of their own **natures** in accordance with the material modes, O chastiser of the enemy. ... (18.43) Heroism, power, **determination**, resourcefulness, **courage in battle**, generosity and **leadership** are the natural qualities of work for the kshatriyas.

(18.47) It is better to engage in **one's own occupation**, even though one may perform it imperfectly, than to accept another's occupation and perform it perfectly. Duties prescribed according to one's nature are never affected by sinful reactions. (18.48) Every endeavor is covered by some fault, just as fire is covered by smoke. Therefore one should not give up the **work born of his nature**, O son of Kunti, even if such work is full of fault. (18.49) One who is self-controlled and **unattached** and who disregards all material enjoyments can obtain, by practice of **renunciation**, the highest perfect stage of freedom from reaction.

(18.45) By following his qualities of work, every man can become perfect. Now please hear from Me how this can be done. (18.46) By **worship of the Lord**, who is the source of all beings and who is all-pervading, a man can attain perfection through performing his own work. ... (18.54) One who is thus transcendently situated at once **realizes the Supreme Brahman** and becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything. He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me. (18.55) One can understand Me as I am, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, only by **devotional service**. And when one is in full consciousness of Me by such devotion, he can enter into the kingdom of God. (18.56) Though engaged in all kinds of activities, My pure devotee, under My protection, reaches the eternal and imperishable abode by **My grace**. (18.57) In all activities just depend upon Me and work always under My protection. In such devotional service, be fully **conscious** of Me. (18.58) If you become conscious of Me, you will pass over all the **obstacles of conditioned life** by My grace. If, however, you do not work in such consciousness but act through **false ego**, not hearing Me, you will be lost. (18.59) If you do not act according to **My direction** and do not fight, then you will be falsely directed. By your **nature**, you will have to be engaged in **warfare**. (18.60) Under **illusion** you are now declining to act according to My direction. But, compelled by the work born of your own **nature**, you will act all the same, O son of Kunti. (18.62) O scion of Bharata, **surrender** unto Him utterly. By His grace you will attain transcendental peace and the supreme and eternal abode.

### 3.2.3.4 Superiority of action over inaction (mostly from Chapter 3)

[The chapter establishes the nature and significance of action versus inaction, introduction elaborate philosophical rationale for Arjuna engaging in battle.]

(3.1) Arjuna said: O Janardana, O Keshava, why do You want to engage me in this ghastly warfare, if You think that intelligence is better than fruitive work? (3.2) My intelligence is bewildered by Your equivocal instructions. Therefore, please tell me decisively which will be most beneficial for me.

[Krishna responds:]

(3.4 ) Not by merely abstaining from work can one achieve freedom from reaction, nor by renunciation alone can one attain **perfection**. ... (3.6) One who restrains the senses of action but whose mind dwells on sense objects certainly deludes himself and is called a pretender. (3.7) On the other hand, if a sincere person tries to control the active senses by the mind and begins karma-yoga [in Krishna consciousness] **without attachment**, he is by far superior. (3.8) Perform your **prescribed duty**, for doing so is better than not working. One cannot even maintain one's physical body without work. (3.9) Work done as a **sacrifice for Vishnu** has to be performed, otherwise work causes **bondage** in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kunti, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain free from bondage.

(3.19) Therefore, without being attached to the fruits of activities, one should act as a matter of duty, for by **working without attachment one attains the Supreme**. ... (3.22) O son of Pritha, there is no work prescribed for Me within all the three planetary systems. Nor am I in want of anything, nor have I a need to obtain anything—and yet I am engaged in prescribed duties.

(3.25) As the ignorant perform their duties with attachment to results, the learned may similarly act, but without attachment, for the sake of **leading people** on the right path.

(3.35) It is far better to discharge one's **prescribed duties**, even though faultily, than another's duties perfectly. Destruction in the course of performing one's own duty is better than engaging in another's duties, for to follow another's path is dangerous.

(3.43) Thus knowing oneself to be transcendental to the material senses, mind and intelligence, O mighty-armed Arjuna, one should **steady the mind** by deliberate spiritual intelligence [Krishna consciousness] and thus—by spiritual strength—conquer this insatiable enemy known as lust.

### 3.2.3.5 **Virtue of disinterested action** (mostly from Chapter 4)

(1.28) All created beings are unmanifest in their beginning, manifest in their interim state, and unmanifest again when annihilated. So what need is there for lamentation?

(2.38) Do thou **fight for the sake of fighting**, without considering happiness or distress, loss or gain, **victory or defeat**—and by so doing you shall never **incur sin**. ...

(4.19) One is understood to be in full knowledge whose every endeavor is **devoid of desire** for sense gratification. He is said by sages to be a worker for whom the reactions of work have been burned up by the fire of perfect knowledge. (4.20) **Abandoning all attachment** to the results of his activities, ever satisfied and independent, he performs no fruitive action, although engaged in all kinds of undertakings. (4.21) Such a man of understanding acts with mind and intelligence perfectly controlled, **gives up** all sense of **proprietorship** over his possessions, and acts only for the bare necessities of life. Thus working, he is not affected by sinful reactions. (4.22) He who is satisfied with **gain which comes of its own accord**, who is **free from duality** and does **not envy**, who is steady in both success and failure, is never entangled, although performing actions. (4.23) The work of a man who is unattached to the modes of material nature and who is fully **situated in transcendental knowledge** merges entirely into transcendence. (4.24) A person who is fully absorbed in **Krishna consciousness** is sure to attain the **spiritual kingdom** because of his full contribution to spiritual activities, in which the consummation is absolute and that which is offered is of the same spiritual nature.

(4.28) Having accepted strict vows, some become enlightened by sacrificing their possessions, and others by performing severe austerities, by practicing the yoga of eightfold mysticism, or by studying the **Vedas** to advance in transcendental knowledge.

(4.30) All these performers who know the meaning of sacrifice become **cleansed of sinful reactions**, and, having tasted the nectar of the results of sacrifices, they advance toward the supreme eternal atmosphere. (4.31) O best of the Kuru dynasty, without **sacrifice** one can never live happily on this planet or in this life: what then of the next? (32) All these different types of sacrifice are approved by the Vedas, and all of them are born of different types of **work**. Knowing them as such, you will become liberated. (4.33) O chastiser of the enemy, the **sacrifice performed in knowledge** is better than the mere sacrifice of material possessions. After all, O son of Pritha, all sacrifices of work culminate in transcendental knowledge. (4.34) Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the **truth**.



(4.38) In this world, there is nothing so sublime and pure as **transcendental knowledge**. Such knowledge is the mature fruit of all mysticism. And one who has become accomplished in the practice of devotional service enjoys this knowledge within himself in due course of time. (4.39) A faithful man who is dedicated to transcendental knowledge and who **subdues his senses** is eligible to achieve such **knowledge**, and having achieved it he quickly attains the supreme spiritual peace. ... (4.41) One who acts in **devotional service**, renouncing the fruits of his actions, and whose doubts have been destroyed by transcendental knowledge, is situated factually in the **self**. Thus he is not bound by the reactions of work, O conqueror of riches. (4.42) Therefore the **doubts** which have arisen in your heart out of ignorance should be slashed by the weapon of **knowledge**. Armed with yoga, O Bharata, stand and fight.

### 3.2.3.6 Indestructibility of the soul (mostly from Chapter 2)

(2.11) The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is **not worthy of grief**. Those who are wise lament neither for the living nor for the dead. (2.12) Never was there a time when I did not **exist**, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be. (2.13) As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into **another body** at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change. (2.14) O son of Kunti, the **nonpermanent** appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer **seasons**. They arise from **sense perception**, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.

(2.16) Those who are seers of the truth have concluded that of the nonexistent [the material body] there is no endurance and of the **eternal** [the soul] there is no change. This they have concluded by studying the nature of both. (2.17) That which pervades the entire body you should know to be **indestructible**. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul. (2.18) The **material** body of the indestructible, immeasurable and eternal living entity is sure to come to an end; therefore, fight, O descendant of Bharata. (2.19) Neither he who thinks the living entity the slayer nor he who thinks it slain is in knowledge, for **the self slays not nor is slain**. (2.20) For the **soul** there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. He is **not slain** when the body is slain. ... (2.23) The soul can never be cut to pieces by any **weapon**, nor burned by fire, nor moistened by water, nor withered by the wind. ... (2.25) It is said that the soul is invisible, inconceivable and immutable. Knowing this, you should not **grieve** for the **body**.

(2.26) If, however, you think that the soul [or the symptoms of life] is always born and dies forever, you still have no reason to lament, O mighty-armed. (2.27) One who has taken his birth is sure to die, and after death one is sure to take **birth again**. Therefore, in the **unavoidable discharge** of your duty, you should not lament. (2.28) All created beings are unmanifest in their beginning, manifest in their interim state, and unmanifest again when annihilated. So what need is there for lamentation? (2.29) Some look on the soul as amazing, some describe him as amazing, and some hear of him as amazing, while others, even after hearing about him, cannot understand him at all. (2.30) O descendant of Bharata, he who dwells in the body can never be slain. Therefore you need not grieve for any living being.

### 3.2.3.7 Human agency nullified by Divine Agency (mostly from Chapter 11, where Krishna displays his Cosmic Form)

(4.8) To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium.

(11.3) O greatest of all personalities, O supreme form, though I see You here before me in Your actual position, as You have described Yourself, I wish to see how You have entered into this **cosmic manifestation**. I want to see that form of Yours. ... (11.5) The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Arjuna, O son of Pritha, see now My opulences, hundreds of thousands of varied divine and multicolored forms. ... (11.7) O Arjuna, whatever you wish to see, behold at once in this body of Mine! This universal form can show you whatever you now desire to see and whatever you may want to see in the future. **Everything**—moving and nonmoving—is here completely, in one place. ... (11.10-11) Arjuna saw in that universal form unlimited mouths, unlimited eyes, unlimited wonderful visions. The form was decorated with many celestial ornaments and bore many **divine upraised weapons**. ... (11.12) If hundreds of thousands of **suns** were to rise at once into the sky, their radiance might resemble the effulgence of the Supreme Person in that universal form. ... (11.17) Your form is difficult to see because of its glaring effulgence, spreading on all sides, like blazing fire or the immeasurable radiance of the sun. Yet I see this glowing form everywhere, adorned with various crowns, **clubs and discs**. ... (11.20) Although You are one, You spread throughout the sky and the planets and all space between. O great one, seeing this wondrous and terrible form, all the planetary systems are perturbed.

(11.21) All the hosts of demigods are surrendering before You and **entering into You**. Some of them, very much afraid, are offering prayers with folded hands. Hosts of great sages and perfected beings, crying “All peace!” are praying to You by singing the Vedic hymns. ... (11.23) O mighty-armed one, all the planets with their demigods are disturbed at seeing Your great form, with its many faces, eyes, arms, thighs, legs, and bellies and Your many terrible **teeth**; and as they are disturbed, so am I. (11.24) O all-pervading Vishnu, seeing You with Your many radiant colors touching the sky, Your **gaping mouths**, and Your great glowing eyes, my mind is perturbed by fear. I can no longer maintain my steadiness or equilibrium of mind. (11.25) O Lord of lords, O refuge of the worlds, please be gracious to me. I cannot keep my balance seeing thus Your blazing deathlike faces and awful teeth. In all directions I am bewildered. (11.26-27) All the sons of Dhritarashtra, along with their allied kings, and Bhishma, Drona, Karna—and our chief **soldiers** also—are rushing into Your fearful mouths. And some I see trapped with **heads smashed between Your teeth**. (11.28) As the many waves of the rivers flow into the **ocean**, so do all these great **warriors enter blazing into Your mouths**. (11.29) I see all people rushing full speed into Your mouths, as **moths** dash to destruction in a blazing fire. (11.30) O Vishnu, I see You **devouring** all people from all sides with Your flaming mouths. Covering all the universe with Your effulgence, You are manifest with terrible, scorching rays. (11.31) O Lord of lords, so fierce of form, please tell me who You are. I offer my obeisances unto You; please be gracious to me. You are the **primal Lord**. I want to know about You, for I do not know what Your mission is.

(11.32) The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Time I am, the great **destroyer of the worlds**, and I have come here to **destroy all people**. With the exception of you [the Pandavas], all the soldiers here on both sides will be slain. (11.33) Therefore get up. Prepare to fight and win glory. Conquer your enemies and enjoy a flourishing kingdom. They are already put to death by My

arrangement, and you, O Savyasaci, can be but an **instrument** in the fight. (11.34) Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna and the other great warriors have already been destroyed by Me. Therefore, kill them and do not be disturbed. Simply fight, and **you will vanquish** your enemies in battle.

### 3.2.3.8 Non-violence (*ahimsā*) as a General Virtue

(10.4-5) Intelligence, knowledge, freedom from doubt and delusion, forgiveness, truthfulness, control of the senses, control of the mind, happiness and distress, birth, death, fear, fearlessness, **nonviolence** equanimity, satisfaction, austerity, charity, fame and infamy — all these various qualities of living beings are created by Me alone.

(13.8-12) Humility; pridelessness; **nonviolence**; tolerance; ... and philosophical search for the Absolute Truth — all these I declare to be **knowledge**, and besides this whatever there may be is ignorance.

(16.1-3) The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Fearlessness; ... self-control ... **nonviolence** ... freedom from anger ... tranquility ... compassion for all living entities ... these transcendental qualities, O son of Bharata, belong to **godly men** endowed with divine nature.

(17.14) Austerity of the body consists in worship of the Supreme Lord, the brāhmaṇas, the spiritual master, and superiors like the father and mother, and in cleanliness, simplicity, celibacy and **nonviolence**.

(18.49) “One who is **self-controlled and unattached** and who disregards all material enjoyments can obtain, by practice of **renunciation**, the highest perfect stage of freedom from reaction.”<sup>101</sup>

## 3.3 Dharmaśāstras<sup>102</sup>

### 3.3.1 Background

The *Dharmaśāstras* are a group of texts dealing with law and proper action, i.e., *dharma*. They seem to have been written in order to codify behaviour, though the texts were never to be read by the common man; the texts are clearly the domain of administrators and priests. The most well known scripture of the series is the “Manu Smṛti”, or the *Laws of Manu* (the first man).

The *Dharma Sūtras* are the earliest of the *Dharmaśāstras* (3<sup>rd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE). These were each created by members of a specific lineage of Brahmins (members of the priestly class), and the authors were aware of one another. Many of the same rules are found in each of the works and many more have undergone only slight alteration. The *Viṣṇu Sūtra* is contemporary with *Manu Smṛti* (1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century CE) and is more comprehensive than any of the *Dharma Sūtras* taken individually. The work begins in such a way so as to posit Viṣṇu as the law giver – clearly a way of legitimizing the work at a time when devotion to Viṣṇu was on the rise.

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<sup>101</sup> 18.49

<sup>102</sup> By Stephen Gucciardi and A. W. Dorn.

In their exposition of dharma, these texts cover a variety of social topics pertinent to life in India around the turn of the first millennium. Social roles are heavily examined according to both *varṇa* and *āśrama* – caste and the stages of life. The contrast between what is pure and impure permeates the entire system of laws, influencing even dietary practices. At the secular level, kingship and associated laws are discussed in detail. This was relevant at a time when most of India was under monarchical governance.

Though the laws of the *Dharmaśāstras* are not observed by practicing Hindus in the modern day, the material contained within still has effect in the Hindu world. These texts provide a glimpse into the attitudes of the past which continue to influence millions of Hindus living in rural Indian communities. One need only to look at Indian matrimonial services in order to see that caste is still relevant, for example, even if many of the serious prejudices surrounding the idea have begun to fall away. Examining the *Dharmaśāstras*, then, allows one to trace back numerous social conventions which inform a segment of those contained within the complex borders of modern Hinduism.

### 3.3.2 Methodology

In extracting these quotes, the objective was not only to provide clear examples of what is proper with respect to warfare (according to these ancient texts), but also to paint a picture of violence in general and attitudes towards authority. For this reason, included are quotes on the role of the student and the ascetic, the latter especially because he embodies a spiritual ideal in ancient India. Repetition is avoided, except when we deemed it necessary (repeated reiteration of the role of the *kṣatriya*, for example). Lastly, the amount of material regarding secular law is vast and makes up the majority of the works – we simply chose to quote those laws believed to be illustrative of attitudes towards violence, especially collective violence such as war.

The translations come from a series of books published in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century known as “Sacred Books of the East”. The series was edited by the famous Indologist Max Müller. Specifically, the references and the electronic access (URLs) are:

*The Sacred Laws of the Āryas*, translated by Georg Bühler:

Part I: Āpastamba and Guatama: available at [www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe02/index.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe02/index.htm) (in *Sacred Books of the East*, Volume 2, 1879)

Part II: Vāsisṭha and Baudhāyana: available at [www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe14/index.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe14/index.htm) (*Sacred Books of the East*, Volume 14, 1882)

“The Institutes of Vishnu,” translated by Julius Jolly, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 7, Oxford, the Clarendon Press, 1880, available at [www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe07/index.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe07/index.htm)

The passages are referenced in the text using round brackets specifying the *śāstra* and the verse number. The following abbreviations were used for the selected *Dharmaśāstras*:

A: Dharma Sūtra of Āpastamba

B: Dharma Sūtra of Baudhāyana

G: Dharma Sūtra of Gautama

Vth: Dharma Sūtra of Vāsiṣṭha

Vn: Viṣṇu Sūtra (Vn)

Each text was examined visually and in full. Instances of violence and proper behaviour were documented when deemed appropriate.

### 3.3.3 Summary<sup>103</sup>

#### 3.3.3.1 Right Conduct

The Dharma Shastras place supreme importance on right conduct (*Dharma*<sup>104</sup>) in accordance with caste duties (Vth, 6.1). A person of one caste should not practice the duties of another caste (Vn, 1.47). When men fulfill their duties according to their caste, they obtain rewards in heaven (A, 2.1.2.2) and also in the next birth (A, 2.1.2.3). If they ignore these caste strictures, they will suffer dire consequences and punishments. Persons who have gone astray through the “weakness of their senses” are “to perform penances proportionate to (the greatness of) their sins, according to the precepts” (A, 2.5.10.12).<sup>105</sup>

The “eternal laws of the castes” was ordained by Vishnu to the goddess of the earth in order to sustain the earth (Vn, 1.48 and 1.65). The four castes are described as: Brāhmanas (teachers of the Vedas), Kshatriyas (users of arms), Vaisyas (tenders of cattle), and Sūdras (servers of the superior castes) (Vn, 2.1-8).

The king is at the head of the *kṣatriya* caste. His duty is to “uphold the moral order in the world” (G, 8.1). He must protect “all created beings” (G, 10.7), offspring (G, 8.3), his subjects (B, 1.10.18.1), the tax-payers (G, 10.28) and the caste system (G, 8.3; G, 11.9; Vn, 3.3).

In dealing with enemy neighbours, he may use one of the four modes to obtain success: negotiation, division, gifts, and force of arms (Vn 3.38). If the time and situation demands, he may make alliances and wage war (Vn 3.39). He can dispatch a military expedition, preferably during certain months of the year (Vn 3.40) or “when some calamity has befallen his foe” (Vn 3.41).

If attacked, a king is to “protect his own realm to the best of his power” (Vn, 3.43) using the force of arms (Vn 3.69). One of the King’s duties is to take measures for ensuring victory (G, 10.13), especially when foes threaten his kingdom (G.10.14). Therefore he must learn the management of chariots and use of the bow (G.10.15). He must “stand firm in battle and not to turn back” (G.10.16).

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<sup>103</sup> By A. Walter Dorn.

<sup>104</sup> Dharma may also be considered more specifically as: the fundamental principles of righteous and justice.

<sup>105</sup> There are many quotes throughout the Dharma Shastras that describe what happens if children are born of parents from two separate castes. The results are always negative. Also, the punishments for adultery is banishment, or death, depending on caste. The punishments are severe. For example, if a Sūdra even “approaches” a female of the Brāhmana caste, the Sūdra is to be thrown into a fire.

Having conquered a country, he should not abolish the laws of that country (Vn 3.42). Nor should he kill the conquered royal race, unless it be of “ignoble descent” (Vn, 3.48-49). He should give royal dignity to a local prince (Vn, 3.48-49). He must not demolish the doors of forts which had been built by a former king (Vn, 3.53). He shall share equitably the booty gained in battle (G, 10.20 and 10.23).

The wider code of conduct of the Kshatriya applies to both the King and his warriors. The role of the Kshatriya caste is “governing and fighting” (A, 2.5.10.4.6). In particular, the duty of a Kshatriya is to “protect the people with weapons” and thereby “gain his livelihood” (Vth, 2.17). The Kshatriya is to receive due reward, in form of taxes, for “protecting the world” and “created beings” (Vn, 2.12; B, 1.10.18.3). Indeed, “conquest” is one of the accepted “modes of acquisition” for a Kshatriya (G, 10.41). The Kshatriya’s duty is “constant practice in arms”, which presumably means training (Vn 2.6).

### **3.3.3.2 Rewards**

The highest duty for “men of the military caste” is to “risk their life in battle” (Vn 3.44). Those who die while protecting “a cow or a Brâhmana or a king or a friend or their own property or their own wedded wife or their own life” will go to heaven (Vn 3.45). They are heroes who “fall fighting for a (worthy) cause” (A, 2.10.26.3). The wives of slain soldiers are to be provided for (Vth, 19.20).

### **3.3.3.3 Limitations**

Kshatriyas shall act in accordance with the rules (A, 2.5.10.4.10). There is no sin in injuring or slaying foes in battle, with certain exceptions (G.10.17). “The Âryas forbid the slaughter of those who have laid down their arms, of those who (beg for mercy) with flying hair or joined hands, and of fugitives” (A, 2.5.10.4.11). Also soldiers shall not slay or injure (G, 10.18) those who

- have lost their horses, charioteers, armour or arms;
- flee with flying hair, those who sit down with averted faces or climb trees;
- are intoxicated, insane or out of their minds;
- are messengers;
- are women, infants, aged men;
- declare themselves to be “cows or Brâhmanas.”

Furthermore, certain types of weapons are proscribed: barbed and poisoned weapons (B, 1.10.18.10).

### **3.3.3.4 Exception for killing assassins**

If someone kills an assassin, no crime is committed (Vth, 3.15). Assassins (âtatâyin) are of many types: “An incendiary, likewise a poisoner, one who holds a weapon in his hand (ready to kill), a robber, he who takes away land, and he who abducts (another man's wife)” (Vth, 3.15). Even if one kills an assassin “learned in the Veda and belonging to a noble family” there is no sin, since “fury recoils upon fury” (Vth, 3.18).

### 3.3.3.5 Other castes and occupations

The duties of Kshatriyas are considered “too cruel for a Brâhmana” (B, 2.2.4.17). A Brâhmana “shall never hurt (any being), he shall be gentle, (yet) firm” (G, 9.73). A Brâhmana is not supposed to take up arms yet he may do so if his life is threatened (G, 7.25). He can protect himself by all possible means (G, 9.34). Vaisyas, as well as Brâhmanas, may take up arms in self-defence, and to prevent a “confusion of the castes” (Vth, 3.24; B, 2.2.4.18)

Students are not to injure animate beings (A, 1.1.2.17) and are to avoid anger (A, 1.1.2.13). Teachers were not to punish students corporally (G, 2.42) but if this is necessary it can be done only with a “thin rope or a thin cane” (G, 2.43).

Ascetics are to give a “promise of safety from injury to all animated beings” (Vth, 10.1.). This is part of their initiation vows (B, 2.10.17.29 and B, 2.10.18.1). They thus have “nothing to fear from any living being” and will not be threatened with danger (Vth, 10.2; B, 2.10.17.30). An ascetic who does not make such a promise, “destroys the born and the unborn” (Vth, 10.3). The avoidance of causing injury to living beings shall extend to “words, thoughts, and acts” (B, 2.6.11.23).

The rules applicable to the Brahma-Vaikhânasas (type of hermits) are even more strict: “Let him not injure (even) gadflies or gnats” (B, 3.3.19).

### 3.3.3.6 Punishments

The punishments for soldiers who commit violations in battle are not spelled out. But for others, the punishments are both clear and strong. If a Sûdra commits homicide (or theft), he shall suffer capital punishment (A, 2.10.27.16). For similar offences, a Brâhmana will be made blind by tying a cloth over his eyes (A, 2.10.27.17).

Within society, homicide causes a “loss of caste” (A, 1.7.21.7). The punishment for killing a Brâhmana is most severe: rebirth in a lower caste or even in the wombs of various animals (A, 2.1.2.6-7). To atone for killing a Kshatriya one must give a thousand cows to Brâhmanas (A 1.9.24.1). For killing of lower castes, the number is less (A 1.9.24.2). One who takes his own or another's life is stigmatized as “Abhisasta” (A, 1.10.28.17.). If killing is done intentionally his guilt is greater (A, 1.10.29.3). But if one slays an “assailant,” there is no sin, for “wrath meets wrath” (A, 1.10.29.7).

For lesser actions against a Brâhmana, there are also severe punishments: raising a weapon against a Brâhmana will incur “banishment from heaven” for a hundred years (G, 21.20). If one strikes, the punishment extends to a thousand years (G, 21.21). If blood flows, heaven is denied for a number of years equal to the number of dust particles which the blood binds together (G, 21.20).

More generally, a man defiled by vile conduct “perishes in this world and in the next” (Vth, 6.1). He is “blamed among men, evils befall him instantly and he is afflicted with disease and short-lived” (Vth, 6.6).

### 3.3.3.7 General support for pacifism

There is general support for non-violence. The soul is purified “by abstention from injuring living beings” (B, 1.5.8.2). He who abstains from injuring (sentient beings) obtains heaven (Vth, 29.3).

## 3.3.4 Extracts from the Dharmaśāstras

### 3.3.4.1 Caste rules and values

(A) 1.7.21.7. Now (follows the enumeration of) the actions which cause loss of caste (Patanîya). 8. (These are) stealing (gold), crimes whereby one becomes an Abhisasta, **homicide**, neglect of the Vedas, causing abortion, ...

(A) 1.9.24.1. He who has **killed a Kshatriya** shall give a thousand cows (to Brâhmanas) for the expiation of his sin. 2. (He shall give) a hundred cows for a Vaisya, 3. Ten for a Sûdra, 4. And in every one (of these cases) one bull (must be given) in excess (of the number of cows) for the sake of expiation. 5. And if women of the (three castes mentioned have been slain) the same (composition must be paid). 6. He who has slain a man belonging to the two (first-mentioned castes) who has studied the Veda, or had been initiated for the performance of a Soma-sacrifice, becomes an Abhisasta. 7. And (he is called an Abhisasta) who has slain a man belonging merely to the Brâhmana caste (though he has not studied the Veda or been initiated for a Soma-sacrifice), 8. Likewise he who has destroyed an embryo of a (Brâhmana, even though its sex be) undistinguishable, 9. Or a woman (of the Brâhmana caste) during her courses.

(A) 1.10.28.17. For **he who takes his own or another's life** becomes an Abhisasta.

(A) 1.10.29.2. He even who **slays unintentionally**, reaps nevertheless the **result** of his sin. 3. (His guilt is) greater, (if he slays) **intentionally**. 4. The same (principle applies) also to other sinful actions, 5. And also to good works. ... 7. In a Purâna (it has been declared), that he who slays an assailant does not sin, for (in that case) **wrath meets wrath**.

(A) 2.1.2.2. Men of all castes, if they fulfil their (assigned) **duties**, enjoy (in heaven) the highest, imperishable bliss. 3. Afterwards when (a man who has fulfilled his duties) returns to this world, he obtains, by virtue of a remainder of **merit**, birth in a distinguished family, beauty of form, beauty of complexion, strength, aptitude for learning, wisdom, wealth, and the gift of fulfilling the laws of his (caste and order). Therefore in both worlds he dwells in happiness, (rolling) like a wheel (from the one to the other). ... 6. Thus after having undergone a long punishment in the next world, a person who has stolen (the gold of a Brâhmana) or **killed** a (Brâhmana) is born again, in case he was a Brâhmana as a Kândâla, in case he was a Kshatriya as a Paulkasa, in case he was a Vaisya as a Vaina. 7. In the same manner other (sinners) who have become **outcasts** in consequence of their sinful actions are born again, on account of (these) sins, losing their caste, in the wombs (of various animals).

(A) 2.5.10.4. The lawful occupations of a Brâhmana are, studying, teaching, sacrificing for himself, officiating as priest for others, giving alms, receiving alms, inheriting, and gleaned corn in the fields; 5. And (he may live by taking) other things which belong to nobody. 6. (The lawful occupations) of a



**Kshatriya** are the same, with the exception of teaching, officiating as priest, and receiving alms. (But governing and **fighting** must be added. 7. (The lawful occupations) of a **Vaisya** are the same as those of a Kshatriya, with the exception of governing and **fighting**. (But in his case) agriculture, the tending of cattle, and trade must be added.

10. **In war** (Kshatriyas) shall act in such a manner as those order, who are learned in that (art of war).

11. The Âryas **forbid the slaughter** of those who have **laid down their arms**, of those who (**beg** for mercy) with flying hair or joined hands, and of **fugitives**.

12. The spiritual guide shall order those who, (whilst) participating according to sacred law (in the rights of their caste), have gone astray through the weakness of their senses, to perform penances proportionate to (the greatness of) their sins, according to the precepts (of the Smṛiti).

13. If (such persons) transgress their (Âkârya's) ord'r, he shall take them before the king. 14. The king shall (send them) to his domestic priest, who should be learned in the law and the science of governing. 15. He shall order (them to perform the proper **penances** if they are) Brâhmanas. 16. He shall reduce them (to reason) by forcible means, excepting corporal punishment and servitude.

(G) 1.1. The Veda is the source of the **sacred** law, 2. And the tradition and practice of those who know the (Veda). 3. Transgression of the law and violence are [*vi*] observed (in the case) of (those) great (men); but both are without force (as precedents) on account of the weakness of the men of later ages. 4. If (authorities) of equal force are conflicting, (either may be followed at) pleasure.

(G) 7.25. If his **life is threatened**, even a Brâhmana may **use arms**.

(G) 8.1. **A king and a Brâhmana**, deeply versed in the Vedas, these two, **uphold the moral order in the world**. 2. On them depends the existence of the fourfold human race, of internally conscious beings, of those which move on feet and on wings, and of those which creep, 3. (As well as) the **protection of offspring**, the prevention of the confusion (of the castes and) the sacred law.

(G) 9.34. He [a Brâmana] shall protect himself by **all** (possible) means.

(G) 9.73. He [a Brâmana] shall **never hurt** (any being), he shall be gentle, (yet) firm, ever restrain his senses, and be liberal.

(G) 10.39. A (man becomes) owner by inheritance, purchase, partition, seizure, or finding. 40. Acceptance is for a Brâhmana an additional (mode of acquisition); 41. **Conquest** for a Kshatriya;

(G) 13.17. **Hell** (is the punishment) for a theft of land.

(G) 20.1. Let him cast off a father who **assassinates** a king, who sacrifices for Sûdras, who sacrifices for his own sake (accepting) money from Sûdras, who divulges the Veda (to persons not authorised to study it), who **kills** a learned Brâhmana, who dwells with men of the lowest castes, or (cohabits) with a female of one of the lowest castes.

(G) 21.20. He who in anger raises (his hand or a **weapon**) against a Brâhmana, will be banished from heaven for a hundred years. 21. If he strikes, (he will lose heaven) for a thousand (years). 22. If blood flows, (he will lose heaven) for a number of years equal to (that of the particles of) dust which the spilt (blood) binds together.

(Vth) 1.2. He who knows and follows the (sacred law is called) a righteous man.

....

6. But he whose heart is free from desire (is called) a Sishta. 7. (Acts sanctioned by) the sacred law (are those) for which no (worldly) cause is perceptible.

...

10. Acts productive of spiritual merit, and customs which (are approved of) in that country, must be everywhere acknowledged (as authoritative); 11. **But not different ones**, (i.e. those) of (countries where) laws opposed (to those of Âryâvarta prevail).

(Vth) 2.15. (The lawful occupations) of a Kshatriya are three, 16. Studying, sacrificing for himself, and bestowing gifts; 17. And his peculiar duty is to **protect the people** with his weapons; let him gain his livelihood thereby.

(Vth) 3.24. A Brâhmana and a Vaisya may take up arms in **self-defence**, and in (order to prevent) a **confusion of the castes**. 25. But that (trade of arms) is the **constant (duty) of a Kshatriya**, because he is appointed to protect (the people).

(Vth) 4.4. Truthfulness, suppression of anger, liberality, **abstention from injuring living beings**, and the procreation of offspring (are duties common to) all (castes). 5. The Mânava (Sûtra states), 'Only w'en he worships the manes and the gods, or honours guests, he may certainly do injury to animals.' 6. 'O' off'ring a Madhuparka (to a guest), at a sacrifice, and at the rites in honour of the manes, but on these occasions only may an animal be slain; that (rule) Manu proclaimed.' 7. 'M'at c'n never be obtained without injuring living beings, and to **injure living beings** does not procure heavenly bliss; therefore the (sages declare) the slaughter (of beasts) at a sacrifice not to be slaughter (in the ordinary sense of the word).' 8. 'N'w he may also cook a full-grown ox or a full-grown he-goat for a Brâhmana or Kshatriya guest; in this manner they offer hospitality to such (a man).'

(Vth) 6.1. (To live according to) the rule of **conduct** is doubtlessly the highest duty of all men. He whose soul is defiled by vile conduct **perishes in this world and in the next**. 2. Neither austerities, nor (the study of) the Veda, nor (the performance of) the Agnihotra, nor lavish liberality can ever save him whose **conduct** is vile and who has strayed from this (path of duty). ... 6. A man of bad conduct is blamed among men, evils befall him constantly, he is afflicted with **disease and short-lived**.

(Vth) 29.3. He who abstains from injuring (sentient beings) **obtains heaven**.

...

10. He who gives a **promise to protect** (somebody) from all dangers (becomes) wise.

(B) 1.5.8.2. The body is purified by water, the understanding by knowledge, the soul by **abstention from injuring living beings**, the internal organ by truth.

(B) 1.10.18.1. Let the king **protect (his) subjects**, receiving as his pay a sixth part (of their incomes or spiritual merit). 2. Brahman, forsooth, placed its majesty in the Brâhmanas, together with (the duties and privileges of) studying, teaching, sacrificing for themselves, sacrificing for others, liberality, and accepting (gifts), for the protection of the Vedas; 3. In the Kshatriyas (it placed) strength, together with (the duties and privileges of) studying, sacrificing, liberality, **(using) weapons, and protecting the treasure (and the life of) created beings**, for the growth of (good) government.

(B) 2.2.4.16. (A Brâhmana) who is unable (to subsist) by teaching, sacrificing for others, or the acceptance of gifts, shall maintain himself by following the duties of Kshatriyas, because that is the next following (caste). 17. Gautama (declares that one shall) not (act thus). For the duties of Kshatriyas are **too cruel** for a Brâhmana. 18. Now they quote also (the following verse): 'Out of regard for the sacred law a Brâhmana and a Vaisya may **take up arms** for (the protection of) cows or Brâhmanas, or when a confusion of the castes (threatens to take place).

(B) 3.10.13. **Abstention from injuring living beings**, truthfulness, abstention from theft (or unrighteously appropriating anything), bathing in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, obedience towards Gurus, continence, sleeping on the ground, dressing in one garment only, and abstaining from food (are the various kinds of) **austerity**.

(Vn) 1.12. Thus the whole earth, after having sunk into (the lower region called) Rasâtala, was in the first place raised in the boar-incarnation by Vishnu, who took **compassion** upon the living beings.

(Vn) 1.47. [Vishnu said to the goddess of the earth:] "Those who practise the **duties** ordained for each caste and for each order, and who act up strictly to the holy law, will sustain thee, O earth; to them is thy care committed.' 48. H'ving received this answer, the goddess of the earth said to the chief of the gods, 'Commun'cate to me the **eternal laws** of the castes and of the orders.

(Vn) 2.4. Their duties are: 5. For a Brâhmana, to teach (the Veda); **6. For a Kshatriya, constant practice in arms**; 7. For a Vaisya, the tending of cattle; 8. For a Sûdra, to serve the twice-born; 9. For all the twice-born, to sacrifice and to study (the Veda). 10. Again, their modes of livelihood are: 11. For a Brâhmana, to sacrifice for others and to receive alms; 12. For a Kshatriya, to **protect the world** (and receive due reward, in form of taxes); 13. For a Vaisya, tillage, keeping cows (and other cattle), traffic, lending money upon interest, and growing seeds; 14. For a Sûdra, all branches of art (such as painting and the other fine arts); 15. In times of distress, each caste may follow the occupation of that next (below) to it in rank. 16. Forbearance, veracity, restraint, purity, liberality, self-control, **not to kill** (any living [being] ... obedience towards one's Guru', visiting places of pilgrimage, sympathy (with the afflicted), 17. Straightforwardness, freedom from covetousness, reverence towards gods and Brâhmanas, and freedom from anger are duties common (to all castes).

(Vn) 3.44 There is no higher **duty** for men of the military caste, than to **risk their life in battle**. 45. Those who have been killed in protecting a cow, or a Brâhmana, or a king, or a friend, or their own property, or their own wedded wife, or their own life, go to **heaven**. 46. Likewise, those (who have been killed) in trying to prevent mixture of castes (caused by adulterous connections).

### 3.3.4.2 Kingship and laws of warfare

(A) 1.9.25.4. A thief shall go to the king with flying hair, carrying a club on his shoulder, and tell him his deed. He (**the king**) shall give him a **blow** with that (club). If the thief dies, his sin is expiated.

(A) 2.5.11.1. In the cases of (men of) other castes, the king, after having examined their actions, may **punish** them even by death. 2. And the king shall not punish on suspicion. 3. But having carefully investigated (the case) by means of questions (addressed to witnesses) and even of ordeals, the king may proceed to punish. 4. A king who acts thus, gains both (this and the next) world.

(A) 2.10.25.1. The general and special **duties** of all castes have been explained. But we will now declare those of a king in particular. ... 11. And in his realm no (Brâhmana) should suffer hunger, sickness, cold, or heat, be it through want, or intentionally. ... 15. That king only takes care of the welfare of his subjects in whose dominions, be it in villages or forests, there is **no danger from thieves**.

(A) 2.10.26.3. Hereby have been declared (the rewards of) other heroes, who fall fighting for a (worthy) cause. 4. He shall appoint men of the first three castes, who are pure and truthful, over villages and towns for the protection of the people. 5. Their servants shall possess the same qualities. 6. They must **protect a town** from thieves in every direction to the distance of one yogana. 7. (They must protect the country to the distance of) one krosa from each village.

(A) 2.10.27.16. In case (a Sûdra) commits **homicide** or theft, appropriates land (or commits similar heinous crimes), his property shall be confiscated and he himself shall suffer capital punishment. 17. But if these (offences be committed) by a Brâhmana, he shall be made blind (by tying a cloth over his eyes).

(G) 10.13. And (to take) measures for **ensuring victory** (is another duty of a king), 14. Especially when danger (from foes threatens the kingdom); 15. And (to learn) the management of chariots and the use of the bow (is a further duty of the king), 16. As well as to stand firm in battle and not to turn back. 17. **No sin (is committed) by injuring or slaying (foes) in battle**, 18. **Excepting** those who have **lost their horses**, charioteers, or arms, those who join their hands (in supplication), those who flee with flying hair, those who sit down with averted faces, those who have climbed (in flight) on eminences or trees, **messengers**, and those who declare themselves to be cows or Brâhmanas. ... 20. The victor shall receive the **booty** gained in battle. 21. But chariots and animals used for riding (belong) to the king, 22. And a preferential share, except when the booty has been gained in single combat. 23. But the king shall equitably divide (all) other (spoils).

(G) 10.28. For it is the duty (of the king) to **protect** the (tax-payers).

(G) 11.9. He [the king] shall **protect the castes** and orders in accordance with justice;

(G) 17. He [the king] shall perform in the fire of the hall the **rites** ensuring prosperity which are connected with expiations (sânti), festivals, a prosperous march, long life, and auspiciousness; as well as those that are intended to cause enmity, to subdue (enemies), to **destroy** (them) by **incantations**, and to cause their misfortune.

(Vth) 3.15. They declare that **the slayer commits no crime by killing an assassin**. 16. Now they quote also (the following verses): 'An incendiary, likewise a poisoner, one who **holds a weapon in his hand (ready to kill)**, a robber, he who takes away land, and he who abducts another man's wife, these six are called assassins (âtatâyin).' 17. 'He may slay an assassin who comes with the intention of slaying, even though he knows the whole Veda together with the Upanishads; by that (act) he (does) not (incur the guilt of) the slayer of a Brâhmana.' 18. 'He who slays an assassin learned in the Veda and belonging to a noble family, does not incur by that act the guilt of the murderer of a learned Brâhmana; (in) that (case) fury recoils upon fury.'

(Vth) 19.17. On the march against the enemy the **army** which consists of companies of ten, shall be able to perform a double (duty). 18. In every (camp) there shall be places where water is distributed.

19. Let him make one hundred men at the least engage in battle. 20. The **wives** (of slain soldiers) shall be provided for.

(B) 1.10.18.8. Let him act according to his instructions. 9. Let him not turn back in battle. **10.** Let him not strike with **barbed or poisoned** (weapons). 11. Let him not fight with those who are in **fear, intoxicated, insane** or out of their minds, (nor with those) who have **lost their armour**, (nor with) **women, infants, aged men, and Brâhmanas**, 12. Excepting assassins (âtatâyin). 13. Now they quote also (the following verse): 'He who slays an assassin, able to teach (the Veda) and born in a (noble) family, does not (incur) by that (act the guilt of) the murderer of a learned Brâhmana; (in) that (case) fury recoils upon fury.'

(Vn) 3.1. Now the duties of a king, are: **2. To protect his people**, 3. And to keep the four castes and the four orders in the practice of their several duties.

(Vn) 3.11. If any offence has been committed in a village, let the lord of that village suppress the evil (and give redress to those that have been wronged). 12. If he is unable to do so, let him announce it to the lord of ten villages; 13. If he too is unable, let him announce it to the lord of a hundred villages; 14. If he too is unable, let him announce it to the lord of the whole district. 15. The lord of the whole district must **eradicate the evil** to the best of his power.

(Vn) 3.17. (Let him appoint)... 20. Stern men for acts of rigour (such as beating and killing);

(Vn) 3.33. The monarch, his council, his fortress, his treasure, his army, his realm, and his ally are the seven constituent elements of a state. 34. (The king) must **punish** those who try to subvert any one among them. 35. He must explore, by means of **spies**, both the state of his own kingdom and of his foe's. **36. Let him show honour to the righteous; 37. And let him punish the unrighteous.** 38. Towards his (neighbour and natural) enemy, his ally (or the power next beyond his enemy), a neutral power (situated beyond the latter), and a power situated between (his natural enemy and an aggressive power): let him adopt (alternately), as the occasion and the time require, (the four modes of obtaining success, viz.) **negotiation, division, presents, and force** of arms. 39. Let him have resort, **as the time demands**, to (the six measures of a military monarch, viz.) making alliance and **waging war**, marching to battle and sitting encamped, seeking the protection (of a more powerful king) and distributing his forces. 40. Let him set out on an expedition in the months of Kaitra or Mârgasîrsha; **41. Or when some calamity has befallen his foe.** 42. Having conquered the country of his foe, let him not abolish (or disregard) the laws of that country. **43. And when he has been attacked by his foe, let him protect his own realm to the best of his power.**

(Vn) 3.47. A king **having conquered** the capital of his foe, should invest there a prince of the royal race of that country with the royal dignity. 48. Let him not extirpate the royal race 49. Unless the royal race be of ignoble descent. 50. He must not take delight in hunting, dice, women, and drinking; 51. Nor in defamation and battery. 52. And let him not injure his own property (by bootless expenses). 53. He must not demolish (whether in his own town, or in the town of his foe conquered by him, or in a fort) doors which had been built there before his time (by a former king).

(Vn) 3.68. Let him appease the onsets of fate by ceremonies averting evil omens and propitiatory ceremonies; 69. And the onsets of his foe (let him repel) by force of arms.

(Vn) 3.96. Let a king in his own domain inflict punishments according to justice, chastise **foreign foes** with rigour, behave without duplicity to his affectionate friends, and with lenity to Brâhmanas.

97. Of a king thus disposed, even though he subsist by gleanings, the **fame** is far spread in the world, like a drop of oil in the water.

### 3.3.4.3 Studentship rules

(A) 1.1.2.19. He shall obey his teacher, except (when ordered to commit) crimes which cause loss of caste. ....

13. He shall avoid honey, meat, perfumes, garlands, sleep in the day-time, ointments, collyrium, a carriage, shoes, a parasol, love, **anger**, covetousness, perplexity, garrulity, playing musical instruments, bathing (for pleasure), cleaning the teeth, elation, dancing, singing, calumny, (and) **terror**

...

17. Gambling, low service, to take things not offered, to **injure animate beings** ...

(G) 2.42. (As a rule) a pupil shall not be **punished corporally**. 43. If no (other course) is possible, (he may be corrected) with a thin rope or a thin cane. 44. If (the teacher) **strikes him** with any other (instrument), he shall be punished by the king.

### 3.3.4.4 Asceticism rules

(G) 3.11. An ascetic shall not possess (any) store.

...

24. (He shall be) **indifferent** towards (all) creatures, (whether they do him) an injury or a kindness. [Repeated 10.29]

(Vth) 10.1. Let an ascetic depart from his house, giving a **promise of safety from injury to all animated beings**. 2. Now they quote also (the following verses): 'That ascetic who wanders about at peace with all creatures, forsooth, has nothing to fear from any living being.'

3. 'But he who becomes an ascetic and does not promise safety from injury to all beings, destroys the born and the unborn; and (so does an ascetic) who accepts presents.'

(Vth) 10.29. Let him be (utterly) indifferent, avoiding to do injury or to show kindness to any living being. [as in 3.24]

(B) 2.6.11.23. With the **three means of punishment**, (viz.) words, thoughts, and acts, he [an ascetic] shall not injure created beings.

(B) 2.10.17.1. Now we will explain the rule for entering the order of ascetics (samnyâsa).

.....

29. (Finally) he pours out as much water as will fill his joined hands, (saying), 'I promise **not to injure any living being**.' 30. Now they quote also (the following verse) An ascetic who roams about after having given a promise of safety to all living beings, is not threatened with danger by any creature.'

(B) 2.10.18.1. Now the following vows are (to be kept by an ascetic): 2. **Abstention from injuring living beings**, truthfulness, abstention from appropriating the property of others, continence, (and) liberality.

(B) 3.3.18. The sum of the rules applicable to all Brahma-Vaikhânasas (is as follows):  
19. 'Let him not injure (even) gadflies or gnats...

### 3.4     **Manu Smṛti (Book of Manu): Hinduism's early laws**

#### 3.4.1     **Background**

The *Manu Smṛti*<sup>106</sup> or *Laws of Manu* (also referred to as *Book of Manu*) is dated anywhere from 200 BCE to 200 CE. It was written in Sanskrit, originally referred to as *Mānavadharmasāstra*, and, as the name suggests, it is attributed to the historio-mythic patriarch, Manu ("the first man"). As part of the Smṛti literature, it embodies a recollection of tradition. It is also considered one of the *dharmaśāstras* (knowledge on righteous conduct) and should be read in conjunction with these texts (e.g., *Arthaśāstra*). Its themes encompass civil and criminal conduct, punishment and atonement. Its scope, as Wendy Doninger writes (p.xvii), includes:

the social obligations and duties of various castes and of individuals in different stages of life; the proper way for a righteous king to rule, and to punish transgressors in his kingdom; the appropriate social relations between men and women of different castes, and of husbands and wives in the privacy of home; birth, death, and taxes; cosmogony, karma, and rebirth; ritual practices; error, and restoration or redemption; and such details of everyday life as the procedure for settling traffic accidents, adjudicating disputes with boatmen ....

Regarding its influence, Doniger (p.xviii) indicates that:

by the early centuries of the Common Era, Manu had become, and remained, the standard source of authority in the orthodox tradition for that centerpiece of Hinduism, *varṇāśramadharma* (social and religious duties tied to class and stage of life). Over the course of the centuries, the text attracted nine complete commentaries, attesting to its crucial significance within the tradition, and it is cited in other ancient Indian texts far more frequently than any other *dharmaśāstra* (it has been established that between a third and a half of Manu is in the *Mahābhārata*, though it is not certain which is the source, and which is the borrower).

The status that Manu held within the insulated self-perpetuating tradition of Sanskrit commentary is clearly formidable, but this by no means necessitates its status in people's lives throughout the subcontinent. Although the *Laws of Manu* is often held by Indians and non-Indians in high esteem as a comprehensive authority on moral and social conduct in the "Hindu world", the rightfulness of that status is largely contested by modern scholarship. The enormous impact of this work, including how early British colonial government understood and enforced "Hindu law", is nevertheless uncontested. It has also become deeply engrained in the post-colonial Hindu consciousness. However, some complained that, in invoking *The Laws of Manu*, British colonial administrators succeeded not in discovering the 'heart' of Hindu law and culture, but rather, in resurrecting an antiquated, obsolete predecessor thereof. Prior to Britain's efforts at production of

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<sup>106</sup> Smṛiti literally means "that which is remembered". These are texts considered of human authorship, contrasted against Śruti ("what is heard") which are considered revelation from the divine.

knowledge about India for the sake of colonial rule, Manu was more of a sequestered cultural relic than a viable legal reference.

The extent to which Manu was consulted in the centuries between its compilation and its 19<sup>th</sup>-century resurrection is heavily contested. *The Laws of Manu* was clearly never intended for as vast a sphere as that comprising Hindu modernity. Manu appears to merely outline the ideal life of social elites functioning in a highly patriarchal, sophisticated, ritualistic, uniform social structure. Removing it from its context and applying it to a much more diverse social setting, centuries later, is arguably inappropriate and counterproductive. As such, its moral authority is challenged not only by scholars, but by lower caste Hindus, and Hindu reformers (e.g., Ambedkar). However, despite the protests of modern scholars and Hindus, and despite the fact that Manu was revived in a possibly manipulative attempt to produce knowledge about “Indian law” by colonial powers, its effect is irreversible. Countless Indians and non-Indians alike consider Manu as an “authority” on Hindu ethical conduct.

### 3.4.2 Methodology

The Manu Smṛiti consists of 2,684 verses divided into 12 chapters. Verses are referenced here by giving the book number followed by the verse number. The translation was that of George Bühler, published in *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 25, [1886]. An electronic version was accessed at [www.sacred-texts.com/hin/manu.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/manu.htm). The electronic search was done using the following keywords: assault; attack\*; battl\*; conflict\*; defen\*; fight\*; force\*; harm\*; inflict\*; injur\*; kill\*; peace\*; slain; slay\*; strik\*; violen\*; war\*; weapon\*; wound\*. Two secondary sources were also used to locate relevant passages, and to obtain background information:

- (1) *Manu and the Arthaśāstra: A Study in Śāstric Intertextuality* Olivelle, Patrick Journal of Indian Philosophy 32: 281–291, 2004; and
- (2) *The Laws of Manu*, Translated by Wendy Doninger and Brian K Smith, Penguin Books: London, 1991.

### 3.4.3 Extracts from the Manu Smṛiti (Book of Manu)

#### 3.4.3.1 General attitude towards violence

(4:120<sup>107</sup>) Let him not recite the Veda on horseback, nor on a tree, nor on an elephant, nor in a boat (or ship)<sup>108</sup>, nor on a donkey, nor on camel, nor standing on barren ground, nor riding in a carriage, (4:121) Nor during a verbal altercation, nor during a mutual **assault**, nor in a camp, nor **during a battle**, nor when he has just eaten, nor during an indigestion, nor after vomiting, nor with sour eructations (4:122). Nor without receiving permission from a guest (who stays in his house), nor while the wind blows vehemently, nor while blood flows from his body, nor when he is **wounded by a weapon**.

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<sup>107</sup> All references to the text are listed BEFORE the corresponding passage in the form “Chapter: Verse.” There are 12 Chapters to the “Laws of Manu.”

<sup>108</sup> All such parenthetical insertions occur on behalf of the translator, G. Bühler,



(4:164) Let him, when angry, not **raise a stick** against another man, nor strike (anybody) except a son or a pupil; those two he may beat in order to correct them.

(8:344) **A king** who desires to gain the throne of Indra and imperishable eternal fame, **shall not**, even for a moment, **neglect (to punish) the man who commits violence**.

(8:345) He who commits **violence must be considered as the worst offender**, (more wicked) than a defamer, than a thief, and than he who injures (another) with a staff. (8:346) But that king who pardons the perpetrator of violence quickly perishes and incurs hatred. (8:347) Neither for friendship's sake, nor for the sake of great lucre, must a king let go perpetrators of violence, who cause terror to all creatures.

(11:33) Let him use without hesitation the sacred texts...speech, indeed, is the weapon of the Brahmana, with that he may slay his enemies.

### 3.4.3.2 Justification for violence

(8:348) Twice-born men may **take up arms** when (they are) **hindered** (in the fulfilment of their duties), when **destruction (threatens)** the twice-born castes (varna) in (evil) times, (8:349) In their own **defence, in a strife** for the fees of officiating **priests**, and in order to **protect women and Brahmanas**; (8:350) One may slay he who (under such circumstances) kills in the cause of right, commits no sin. One may slay without hesitation **an assassin** who approaches (with murderous intent), whether (he be one's) **teacher, a child or an aged man, or a Brahmana** deeply versed in the Vedas. (8:351) By killing an assassin the slayer incurs no guilt, whether (he does it) publicly or secretly; in that case fury recoils upon fury.

(9:322) Kshatriyas prosper not without Brahmanas, Brahmanas prosper not without Kshatriyas; Brahmanas and Kshatriyas, being closely united, prosper in this (world) and in the next. (9:323) But (a king who feels his end drawing nigh) shall bestow all his wealth, accumulated from fines, on Brahmanas, make over his kingdom to his son, and then seek **death in battle**.

(10:79) To **carry arms** for **striking** and for throwing (is prescribed) for Kshatriyas as a **means of subsistence**; to trade, (to rear) cattle, and agriculture for Vaisyas; but their duties are liberality, the study of the Veda, and the performance of sacrifices.

### 3.4.3.3 Violence as punishment

(7:12) The (man), who in his exceeding folly hates (the king), will doubtlessly perish; for the king quickly makes up his mind to destroy such (a man). (7:13). Let no (man), therefore, transgress that law which favours, nor (his orders) which **inflict pain** on those in disfavour.

(7:16) Having fully considered the time and the place (of the offence), the strength and the knowledge (of the offender), let him justly **inflict that (punishment)** on men who act unjustly. (7:17) **Punishment** is (in reality) the king (and) the male, that the manager of affairs, that the ruler, and that is called the surety for the four orders' obedience to the law. (7:18) **Punishment alone governs all created beings, punishment alone protects them, punishment watches over them while they sleep**; the wise declare punishment (to be identical with) the law. (7:19) If (punishment) is properly inflicted after (due) consideration, it makes all people happy; but inflicted without consideration, it destroys everything. (7:20) If the king did not, without tiring, inflict punishment on those worthy to be punished, the stronger would roast the weaker, like fish on a spit; (7:21) The crow would eat the sacrificial cake and the dog would lick the sacrificial viands, and ownership would not remain with any one, the lower ones would (usurp the place of) the higher ones. (7:22). **The whole**

**world is kept in order by punishment**, for a guiltless man is hard to find; through fear of punishment the whole world yields the enjoyments (which it owes). (7:23) The gods, the Danavas, the Gandharvas, the Rakshasas, the bird and snake deities even give the enjoyments (due from them) only, if they are tormented by (the fear of) punishment. (7:24) All castes (varna) would be corrupted (by intermixture), all barriers would be broken through, and all men would rage (against each other) in consequence of mistakes with respect to punishment. (7:25) But where Punishment with a black hue and red eyes stalks about, destroying sinners, there the subjects are not disturbed, provided that he who inflicts it discerns well. (7:26). They declare that king to be a just inflictor of punishment, who is truthful, who acts after due consideration, who is wise, and who knows (the respective value of) virtue, pleasure, and wealth. (7:27) A king who properly inflicts (punishment), prospers with respect to (those) three (means of happiness); but he who is voluptuous, partial, and deceitful will be destroyed, even through the (unjust) punishment (which he inflicts). (7:28) Punishment (possesses) a very bright lustre, and is hard to be administered by men with unimproved minds; it strikes down the king who swerves from his duty, together with his relatives. (7:29) Next it will afflict his castles, his territories, the whole world together with the movable and immovable (creation), likewise the sages and the gods, who (on the failure of offerings) ascend to the sky. (7:30) (Punishment) cannot be inflicted justly by one who has no assistant, (nor) by a fool, (nor) by a covetous man, (nor) by one whose mind is unimproved, (nor) by one addicted to sensual pleasures. (7:31) By him who is pure (and) faithful to his promise, who acts according to the Institutes (of the sacred law), who has good assistants and is wise, punishment can be (justly) inflicted.

#### 3.4.3.4 Combat etiquette

(7:87) **A king who, while he protects his people**, is defied by (foes), be they equal in strength, or stronger, or weaker, **must not shrink from battle, remembering the duty of Kshatriyas**. (7:88) Not to turn back in battle, to protect the people, to honour the Brahmanas, is the best means for a king to secure happiness. (7:89) Those kings who, seeking to slay each other in battle, fight with the utmost exertion and do not turn back, **go to heaven**. (7:90) When he fights with his foes in battle, let him **not strike** with weapons **concealed (in wood)**, nor with (such as are) **barbed, poisoned, or the points of which are blazing with fire**. (7:91) Let him not strike one who (in flight) has climbed on an eminence, nor a **eunuch**, nor one who joins the **palms of his hands (in supplication)**, nor one who **(flees) with flying hair**, nor one who **sits down**, nor one who says **'I am thine;'** (7:92) Nor one who **sleeps**, nor one who has **lost his coat of mail**, nor one who is **naked**, nor one who is **disarmed**, nor one who **looks on** without taking part in the fight, nor one who is **fighting with another (foe)**; (7:93). Nor one whose weapons are **broken**, nor one **afflicted (with sorrow)**, nor one who has been grievously **wounded**, nor one who is in **fear**, nor one who has **turned to flight**; (but in all these cases let him) remember the **duty (of honourable warriors)**. 7:94. But the (Kshatriya) who is slain in battle, while he **turns back in fear**, takes upon himself **all the sin of his master**, whatever (it may be)...(7:98). Thus has been declared the blameless, **primeval law for warriors**; from this law a **Kshatriya** must not depart, when he strikes his foes in battle.

(7:102) **Let him be ever ready to strike, his prowess constantly displayed**, and his secrets constantly concealed, and let him constantly explore the weaknesses of his foe. (7:103) Of him who is always ready to strike, the whole world stands in awe; let him therefore make all creatures subject to himself even by the employment of force. (7:104) **Let him ever act without guile, and on no account treacherously**; carefully guarding himself, let him always fathom the treachery which his foes employ. (7:105) His enemy must not know his weaknesses, but he must know the weaknesses of his enemy; as the tortoise (hides its limbs), even so let him secure the members (of his government against treachery), let him protect his own weak points. (7:106) Let him plan his undertakings

(patiently meditating) like a heron; like a lion, let him put forth his strength; like a wolf, let him snatch (his prey); like a hare, let him double in retreat.

### 3.4.3.5 War strategy

(7:107) When he is thus engaged in conquest, let him **subdue all the opponents** whom he may find, by the (four) expedients<sup>109</sup>, conciliation and the rest. (7:108) If they **cannot be stopped by the three first expedients**, then let him, overcoming them by **force** alone, gradually bring them to subjection. (7:109) Among the four expedients, conciliation and the rest, the learned always recommend **conciliation** and (the employment of) **force** for the prosperity of kingdoms. (7:110) As the weeder plucks up the weeds and preserves the corn, even so let the king **protect his kingdom** and destroy his opponents. (7:158). Let (the king) consider as hostile his immediate neighbour and the partisan of (such a) foe, as friendly the immediate neighbour of his foe, and as neutral (the king) beyond those two. (7:159) Let him overcome all of them by means of the (four) expedients, conciliation and the rest, (employed) either singly or conjointly, (or) by bravery and policy (alone).

(7:160) **Let him constantly think of the six measures of royal policy** (guna, viz.) alliance, war, marching, halting, dividing the army, and seeking protection. (7:161) Having carefully considered the business (in hand), let him resort to sitting quiet or marching, alliance or **war**, dividing his forces or seeking protection (as the case may require). (7:162) But the king must know that there are **two kinds of alliances and of wars**, (likewise two) of both marching and sitting quiet, and two (occasions for) seeking protection.) (7:163) An alliance which yields present and future advantages, one must know to be of two descriptions, (viz.) that when one marches together (with an ally) and the contrary (when the allies act separately). (7:164) War is declared to be of two kinds, (viz.) that which is undertaken **in season or out of season, by oneself and for one's own purposes, and (that waged to avenge) an injury done to a friend**. (7:165). Marching (to attack) is said to be twofold, (viz. that undertaken) by one **alone** when an urgent matter has suddenly arisen, and (that undertaken) by one **allied** with a friend. (7:166) Sitting quiet is stated to be of two kinds, (viz. that incumbent) on one who has gradually been weakened by fate or in consequence of former acts, and (that) in favour of a friend. (7:167) If the army stops (in one place) and its master (in another) in order to effect some purpose, that is called by those acquainted with the virtues of the measures of royal policy, the twofold division of the forces. (7:168). Seeking refuge is declared to be of two kinds, (first) for the purpose of attaining an advantage when one is harassed by enemies, (secondly) in order to become known among the virtuous (as the protege of a powerful king). (7:169). When (the king) knows (that) at some future time his **superiority** (is) certain, and (that) at the time present (he will suffer) little **injury**, then let him have recourse to **peaceful** measures. (7:170) But when he thinks all his **subjects to be exceedingly contented**, and (that he) himself (is) **most exalted (in power)**, then let him **make war**.

(7:171) When he knows his own **army** to be **cheerful in disposition and strong**, and (that) of his **enemy the reverse**, then let him **march against his foe**. (7:172) But if he is very weak in chariots and beasts of burden and in troops, then let him carefully sit quiet, gradually conciliating his foes. (7:173) When the king knows the enemy to be stronger in every respect, then let him divide his army and thus achieve his purpose. (7:174) But when he is very easily assailable by the forces of the enemy, then let him quickly seek refuge with a righteous, powerful king. (7:175) That (prince) who will coerce both his (disloyal) subjects and the army of the foe, let him ever serve with every effort like a

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<sup>109</sup> The four expedients (known in Sanskrit as *upakramas* or *upāyas*) are conciliation (*sāma*), bribery (*dāna*), dissension (*beda*), and physical force (*daṇḍa*)

Guru. (7:176) When, even in that (condition), he sees (that) **evil is caused by (such) protection, let him without hesitation have recourse to war.** (7:177) By all (the four) expedients a politic prince must arrange (matters so) that neither friends, nor neutrals, nor foes are superior to himself. (7:178) Let him fully consider the future and the immediate results of all undertakings, and the good and bad sides of all past (actions). (7:179) He who knows the good and the evil (which will result from his acts) in the future, is quick in forming resolutions for the present, and understands the consequences of past (actions), will not be conquered. (7:180) Let him arrange everything in such a manner that no ally, no neutral or foe may injure him; that is the sum of political wisdom. (7:181) But if the king undertakes an expedition against a hostile kingdom, then let him gradually advance, in the following manner, against his foe's capital. (7:182) Let the king undertake his march in the fine month Margasirsha, or towards the months of Phalguna and Kaitra, according to the (condition of his) army. (7:183) Even at other times, when he has a certain **prospect of victory, or when a disaster** has befallen his **foe**, he may advance to **attack** him. (7:184). But having duly arranged (all affairs) in his original (kingdom) and what relates to the expedition, having secured a basis (for his operations) and having duly dispatched his spies; (7:185). Having cleared the three kinds of roads, and (having made) his sixfold army (efficient), let him leisurely proceed in the manner prescribed for warfare against the enemy's capital. (7:186). Let him be very much on his guard against a friend who secretly serves the enemy and against (deserters) who return (from the enemy's camp); for such (men are) the most dangerous foes.

## 3.5 The Mahābhārata

### 3.5.1 Introduction

The Mahābhārata is a vast Sanskrit epic, widely read, recited and recounted in the Hindu world and across South Asia. It contains the Bhāgavad Gītā, one of the most important Hindu texts. The Bhāgavad Gītā is often treated as a scripture of its own and is covered in a separated section of this study (3.2).

The Mahābhārata consists of some 90,000 verses in 18 volumes, each subdivided into several chapters, then cantos. Despite the vast accretion of subplots (secondary stories added through the centuries, involving various mythologies), the main plot concerns the legitimacy of succession to the throne of Hastinapur. The original king of Hastinapur fathers two sons. The eldest, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, would have been heir to the throne had he not been born blind. The younger son, Pāṇḍu, therefore succeeded the throne. Pāṇḍu fathers five sons who, upon Pāṇḍu's untimely death, are left in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's care; Dhṛtarāṣṭra assumes control of the kingdom while the boys mature. Yudhiṣṭira, the epic's greatest hero, is the eldest of the Pāṇḍavas (i.e., sons of Pāṇḍu) and he is therefore the rightful heir to the throne. His cousins, particularly Duryodhana the eldest son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, refuse to give it up and their father has a natural preference for them. Although there are *various* issues at stake, the conflict of succession is the essential kernel "cause" for the Great War.

Books 1-5 (titled "The Beginning", "The Assembly Hall", "The Forest", "Virāṭa", "Effort," respectively) concern events leading up to the great war of Kurukṣetra; Books 6-10 ("Bhīṣma", "Droṇa", "Karna", "Śalya" and "Sleep") concern the war itself, while Books 11-18 (Women,

Peace, Instruction, Horse Sacrifice, Hermitage, Clubs, Great Journey, Ascent) concern the aftermath thereof. The present work is most concerned with the first group, Books 1-5, which deal with the build up and eventual “decision” to go to war.

Book Five (The Book of Effort) is most pertinent as it emphasizes the attempt to avoid war. Stephen Rosen (2002) points our attention in the introductory essay to, *Holy War: Violence and the Bhāgavad-Gītā*, to the undeniable fact that that the heroes of the *Mahābhārata* favour peace. The “Book of Effort” outlines “the intense endeavour made by the Pāṇḍāvās”<sup>110</sup> to seek reconciliation. However, war becomes inevitable as the Kauravas refuse every attempt made at conciliation. In support of this, Van Buitenen elucidates that the name of book five is derived from the Sanskrit word *udyoga*, meaning “effort”, which here connotes an effort for peace as well as the effort to prepare for warfare. This is the final book before the catastrophic war commences. The peace effort takes the form of negotiations between the two parties. It is clear that war is considered only as a last resort. The final of several messengers is Kṛṣṇa himself who successively applies the four diplomatic tactics (*upāya*, literally “means”) recognized by Manu (7.109): *sāma* (conciliation); *dāna* (gift or bribery); *bheda* (subversion of allies); and *daṇḍa* (punishment)<sup>111</sup> (I.137). Rosen elaborates:

In the Indic tradition, the just war doctrine is reminiscent of the *Caturōpāyas*, “the four means”, which include three methods of diplomacy that attempt to avoid war (the fourth and final alternative). If one observes the first three of these tactics and cannot find a peaceful solution, then war becomes inevitable and may even be deemed righteous (*dharmayuddha*). These “four means” are: (1) *sāma* (pacification or praising your opponent with pleasing words); (2) *dāna* (the giving of a gift, such as land, in the spirit of reconciliation); (3) *bheda* (a thought-provoking threat to lead to a peaceful alternative); and (4) *daṇḍa* (punishment, or war, which is only engaged in if the prior three attempts have failed). A righteous war, by this definition, is not necessarily religious but is based on principles of justice and self-defense, and is always engaged in as a last resort.<sup>112</sup>

It is clear that peace is of great value in the tradition, and ironically, praised throughout the *Mahābhārata*. But, invariably, upon exhaustion of all available recourses to resolve the conflict peacefully, the war ensues. As van Buitenen writes<sup>113</sup>:

[T]he entire *Book of the Effort* is as much about the effort to prevent the war, or at least stall, the war as to raise arms. The political persuasiveness that Kṛṣṇa tries to exert is preceded by Vidura’s moral persuasiveness. It is the exact opposite of mother (*sic*) Vidura’s instruction as a call to arms. Kṛṣṇa’s own embassy is punctuated by narratives that keep stressing the unwisdom of rashness. In the end all these efforts,

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<sup>110</sup> Rosen 14

<sup>111</sup> Vol 1, 137.

<sup>112</sup> Rosen (24) also writes that, according to some schools of Vedic thought, “lethal retaliation” is permissible in response to the following provocations: “(1) administering poison, (2) setting fire to another’s home, (3) stealing, (4) occupying another’s land, (5) kidnapping another’s wife, (6) attacking with a deadly weapon”. Rosen quotes the *Manu-saṃhitā* 8.350-1 which says: “Whether he be a teacher...an old man, or a much learned Brahmin, as he comes as a criminal in any of the above six ways, a kṣatriya should kill him...There is no sin in killing one so heartless.” Rosen 24

<sup>113</sup> Vol. 1, 181.

successfully frustrated, become a more and more impressive testimony to the undesirability as well as the inevitability of this war.

For this work, the printed scripture was searched manually/visually without computer search engines for instances relating to war, fighting and the use of force. The sources used for the extracting were the print copies of the van Buitenen translation (see Bibliography). Online versions of that translation of the Mahābhārata (Univ. of Chicago Press) do not appear to be available at this time. However, electronic copies of other versions of the Mahābhārata are available online. For example, the webpage [www.sacred-texts.com/hin/maha/index.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/maha/index.htm) provides the translation (1883-1896) by Kisari Mohan Ganguli. This version can be searched book by book with the following term in Google search, “site:sacred-texts.com/hin/m0x” (where x ranges from 1 to 18), followed by the search terms (e.g., fighting, war, weapon, etc). The Chopra 1990s televised series on the Mahābhārata can be viewed online at [www.rajshri.com/mahabharat](http://www.rajshri.com/mahabharat).

### 3.5.2 Extracts from the Mahābhārata

#### 3.5.2.1 Justification for war

##### Book IV: The Book of Virāṭa

(Chapter 47, “The Cattle Raid”, 44.1-4, p.94)

When we study the texts we can think of many courses of action, but the ancient sages tell us that **war is the worst course of all**. War if suited to time and place will bring victory, while the same war, out of time, will yield no fruit. Bravery **at the right time** and place is enjoined for our well-being. It is by **weighing the advantages**<sup>114</sup> of the effects that a decision should be reached, for the wise do not judge a chariot’s capacity by the boast of its maker.

##### Book V: The Book of Effort

(Chapter 56, “The Temptation of Karṇa”, 148.8-16, p.460)

[Setting: Kṛṣṇa explains to the Pāṇḍavas on return from his “peace mission” that he made several offers and threats to the Kauravas in order to avoid the impending war.]

Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa] said:

...First I used a **conciliatory approach**, hoping for a sense of **brotherliness** to prevail, to prevent a **breach** in the dynasty of Kuru, and to further the **well-being** of the subjects. When **conciliatoriness failed**, I **tried alienation** and recited your feats, human and divine. When Suyodhana ignored my conciliatory speech, I convened all the kings and attempted to **sow discord**. I displayed dreadful and terrifying **miracles** and superhuman exploits, Lord Bhārata. I **threatened** the kings, denigrated Suyodhana, and **intimidated** Rādheya and Saubala time and again. Again and again I pointed to the meanness of Dhārtarāṣṭras and heaped blame on them, trying to alienate those kings over and over again with words and advice. Once more conciliatory, I mentioned **gifts**, in order to prevent a breach in the dynasty of Kuru and accomplish my mission, saying, “Those boys, those Pāṇḍavas, will shed their pride and **submit** to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Bhīṣma, and Vidura. Let them proffer

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<sup>114</sup> This is similar to the Just War criteria of Proportionality of Ends (also called Net Benefit).

you the kingdom and themselves remain no more masters. Let it be as the king and Gāngeya and Vidura have stated. Let the whole realm be yours, let go of **just five villages**. Surely your father can afford to support them, greatest of kings!” Yet at such words the evil man did not change his mind.

Now I see **no other course** open but the fourth – **punishment**. The kings are marching to Kurukṣetra to their doom! I have told all that befell in the assembly of the Kurus: they will not give you the kingdom without war, Pāṇḍava. Driven to destroy, they now face death.

(Chapter 50, “The Embassy of Saṁjaya”, 26.1-4, p.232-3)

[Setting: Dhṛtarāṣṭra sends Saṁjaya to speak discreetly to the Paṇḍavas, in order to convey his disconcertion and his hope for peace. Upon arrival, Saṁjaya greets the warriors there, praise their virtues, and request that they join Dhṛtarāṣṭra in his desire for peace. During the exchange Yuddhiṣṭhira makes the comments which follow.]

Yuddhiṣṭhira said:

What words have you heard from me, Saṁjaya,

What warlike words, that you fear for war?

No war, my friend, is better than war:

**Who would go to war, bard, if he had found peace?**

If every wish of his heart would come true

For a man who did nothing, O Saṁjaya,

I know that he would do nothing at all:

And what is more **frivolous** than going to war?

**Why would a man knowingly go to war?**

**Who cursed by his fate would chose for war?**

(Chapter 53, “The Suing for Peace”, 48.45, p.310)

Vaiśaṁpāyana said:

“...I think we should **negotiate** with the Pāṇḍavas before we wage war.”

(Chapter 54, “The Coming of the Lord”, 70.53-60, p.345)

Yuddhiṣṭhira said:

“**War is evil in any form**. What killer is not killed in return? ... There is always remorse after the killing of others...the aftermath [of war] is [always] evil”

## **Book 12: The Book of Peace**

(Chapter 84l, “Law, Force, and War”, 103.15, p.425)

Bhīṣma said:

Yuddhiṣṭhira, after assembling a vast, fourfold army, you should first exert yourself by means of **conciliation**, then you should exert yourself in war. Bhārata, the very **worst victory** is that which involves warfare...

[Bhīṣma:] (103.20-40, p.425)

...you should **never resort** to clash if there is **any possibility** at all of not doing so<sup>115</sup>, War is said to be the **last resort**, after **conciliation**, **dividing the enemy**, and offering **payments**....one should repeatedly practice conciliation toward them...He [the king] should **send agents** for the purpose of splitting apart his interior enemies.

When the king is superior, a peaceful alliance with him is recommended...

**Forgiveness** is the magical illusion employed by good men; really, good men are never unforgiving. Learn to use forgiveness and non-forgiveness, son of Pṛthā. The **glory of a king who forgives** after he conquers grows greater...

He should **say something nice** even as he is about to attack, Bhārata, and even as he attacks. And after he has attacked, he should mourn....

### 3.5.2.2 Warrior code of conduct in war

Book 12, *The Book of Peace*

(Chapter 84e, “Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva Inaugurates Bhīṣma’s Instruction of Yudhiṣṭhira”, 55.15-20, pp.289-290)

Bhīṣma said:

Kṛṣṇa, as giving, studying, and asceticism are Law for Brahmins, the striking down of bodies in battle is **Law for kṣatriyas**. It truly was Lawful to Meritorious Action that he kill fathers, grandfathers, sons, teachers, affinal and blood relatives who proceeded against him wrongly in war. The kṣatriya who kills his teachers in war, when they are **greedy and wicked and turn their back to their agreements**, he, Keśava, knows what is Lawful. The kṣatriya who has been called to battle **must always fight**.

(Chapter 84l, “Law, Force, and War”, 96.1-11, p.411):

Yuddhiṣṭhira said:

When a kṣatriya tries to conquer another kṣatriya in war, how can his conquest be lawful?

Bhīṣma said:

The king who has arrived in a country...should say, “I am your king and I shall **protect** you always. Pay me with the Lawful taxes. Will you accept me?” If they choose this one who has come there, all will be well. Should they not be kṣatriyas but oppose him somehow, they are to be restrained by any and all means, for they are doing work that is not right for them to do. Now another [a kṣatriya] may take up weapons with the thought that the kṣatriya [the invader] is not capable of victory, or that he is incapable of protecting the country or that he is trying for too much.

Yuddhiṣṭhira said:

Now how should one fight against a kṣatriya who attacks another kṣatriya? Tell me this, grandfather.

Bhīṣma said:

One should not fight in battle a kṣatriya who is **not equipped** [i.e., armed] for war, one who is without armour. A **single warrior** should be addressed by a single warrior, “You Shoot” and “I am shooting”. If one comes who is equipped, then he should be equipped. If one comes with an army, then he, backed with his army, should challenge him. If one should make war with him **deceitfully**, then he should attack that one with deceit. And if he makes war righteously, then one should oppose him righteously.

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<sup>115</sup> This is an exact statement of the Last Resort criterion used in Just War theory.



One should not attack chariots with calvary: **chariot** warriors should attack chariots. One should not assail someone in **distress**, neither to scare him nor defeat him. There should be no arrows smeared with poison, nor any **barbed arrows** – these are **weapons of evil people**.

War should be waged for the sake of **conquest**; one should not be enraged toward an enemy who is not trying to kill him.

If, upon an outbreak of hostilities among strictly righteous people, a righteous man gets into **trouble** on a battlefield, then one who is **wounded** should not be attacked in [any] way, nor one who has no son, one whose sword is broken, one whose horse has been destroyed, one whose bowstring has been cut, nor one whose **vehicle** has been destroyed.

(97.1, p.412)

Bhīṣma said:

If he has captured a man who has discarded his sword, whose armour is broken into pieces, who **pleads** with his hands folded in supplication, saying, “I am yours”, then he should not harm that man. A king should not wage war against anyone who has already been defeated by force...A **king should fight against a king**, ...no other man who is not a king should ever assail a king in any way...The king's **enemy should not be abused, nor tortured in any way**...

Book 10: *The Book of Sleeping Warriors*

[*Note*: The Sauptikaparvan is the 10<sup>th</sup> Book of the epic which outlines an account of tragic events ending the Great War. Aśvatthāman is intent on avenging his father Droṇa's death by killing Dhṛṣṭadyumna and the entire Pāṇḍava entourage. He sets out to do so at night, while they are sleeping, which is entirely against the kṣatriya dharma. The book reveals insight into the warrior's code of conduct, most of which is articulated by Kṛpā, who counsels Aśvatthāman to wait until the morning, and not kill his enemy in their sleep. His warning is as follows (chapter 5, verses 9-12, p.22)]

“In this world, slaughter of the **sleeping** is not  
Is not respected as conforming to dharma.  
The same applies to those whose arms have been laid down,  
To those whose fighting **chariots** have been unyoked,  
To those who have declared their allegiance,  
To **refugees**, and to those with **disheveled hair** [one in flight],  
To those, as well, whose chariots have been destroyed....  
The wicked man who seeks to harm them in that state,  
Without a doubt, would dive into a raftless,  
Fathomless, shoreless hell.”

Aśvatthāman, in his own defense, lists the various breaches of conduct made by the Pāṇḍavas themselves (chapter 5, 16-26):

“My father, who had **laid aside his sword**, was felled by Dhṛṣṭadyumna.  
And the great warrior Karṇa, when his chariot's wheel  
Was stuck, and he was motionless in supreme  
**Distress** was killed by the Gāṇḍīva bow.  
In this same way, Bhīṣma, Śāmtanu's son, **unarmed**,  
His sword laid down on Śikhaṇḍin's account,  
Was killed by Arjuna.  
So too the great archer Bhūriśravas,

While **fasting** to death on the battlefield,  
Was felled by Yuyudhāna though kings cried out.  
And Duryodhana, confronted in battle  
By Bhīma with a mace, was **unlawfully felled**.”

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## 3.6 The Nitiśāstra

The Nitiśāstra (“Niti-shastra” or science of political ethics) was one of the two main works of Cāṇakya (more famously known as Kautilya); the other being the Arthaśāstra (covered here in Section 3.1). Both books emphasize self-protection and aggrandizement, leading some to call Cāṇakya the “Indian Machiavelli.”<sup>116</sup>

The text was scanned electronically using the following keywords: death, serpent, sacrifice, war, weapons, claws, enemy, battle, kill, strikes, quarrel, stick, invasion, die, kingdom, lion, strenuous, fight, bold, beast, force, arms, army, commander, wasp, tiger, protect, poisonous, terror, venomous, lost, powerful, mighty, hunter, thwarts, destroy, wicked, perishable, burns, shoot, safe, fire, royal, life, strength, overcome

The source of the text was found online in a translation by Swami Sri Miles Davis (Patita Pavana dasa) of ISKCON Lucknow, India in 1981:

[www.indiadvine.org/hinduism/articles/169/1/Chanakyas-Niti-Shastra](http://www.indiadvine.org/hinduism/articles/169/1/Chanakyas-Niti-Shastra).

### 3.6.1 Summary

The text purports to help one do one’s duty and know “what is good and what is bad” in the field of political ethics (1.1-2). It does not deal with war or use of force in battle, except indirectly. The advice is more general. Weapons and fighting are mentioned only occasionally. The text suggests that one be distrustful of men carrying weapons (1.15), and advises one to “see that your enemy comes to grief” (3.3). It states that it is evil to “save an enemy in battle” (2.14). It advocates armed strength and what would now be called a *realpolitik* approach. For instance, the text asserts

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<sup>116</sup> Herbert H. Gowen (1929). “The Indian Machiavelli” or Political Theory in India Two Thousand Years Ago, *Political Science Quarterly* 44 (2), p.173-192.

that the power of a king “lies in his mighty arms” (7.11). It places strong emphasis on strength: “Conciliate a strong man by submission [to him], a wicked man by opposition, and the one whose power is equal to yours by politeness or force” (7.10) One should please the man of whom we expect a favour (14.9). The value of deterrence can be learned from the serpent who can “raise high its hood, but the show of terror is enough to frighten people -- whether he be venomous or not” (9.10). Happy men are said to be “courageous with enemies” (12.3) but the text also advocates “running away to safety from a foreign invasion” (3.19).

War is to be done by “many together” (6.12). The text recognizes the necessity of command or the “army is lost” (8.8). It suggests that timing is important, as learned from two animals. The text suggests that leaders learn from the cock when to “take a bold stand and fight” (6.18). “Of a rascal and a serpent, the serpent is the better of the two, for he strikes only at the time he is destined to kill, while the former at every step.” The text suggests the use of skill and intelligence (10.16) and dismissed power gained only by bulk (11.3).

The text advocates a self-centered approach to life: “Give up a member to save a family, a family to save a village, a village to save a country, and the country to save yourself” (3.10). It advocates corporal punishment (“use the stick”) for children between five and fifteen (3.18).

### 3.6.2 Extracts from the Nitiśāstra

#### 3.6.2.1 Chapter One

1. Humbly bowing down before the almighty Lord Sri Vishnu, the Lord of the three worlds, I recite maxims of the **science of political ethics** (*niti*) selected from the various *śāstras*.

2. That man who by the study of these maxims from the *śāstras* acquires a knowledge of the most celebrated principles of **duty**, and understands what ought and what ought not to be followed, and what is good and what is bad, is most excellent.

....

12. He is a **true friend** who does not forsake us in time of need, misfortune, famine, or war, in a king's court, or at the crematorium (*śmaśana*).

15. **Do not put your trust** in rivers, men who carry **weapons**, beasts with claws or horns, women, and members of a royal family.

#### 3.6.2.2 Chapter Two

14. Separation from the wife, disgrace from one's own people, **an enemy saved in battle**, service to a wicked king, poverty, and a mismanaged assembly: these six kinds of **evils**, if afflicting a person, burn him even without fire.

#### 3.6.2.3 Chapter Three

3. Give your daughter in marriage to a good family, engage your son in learning, **see that your enemy comes to grief**, and engage your friends in *dharma*.

4. Of a rascal and a serpent, the serpent is the better of the two, for **he strikes only at the time he is destined to kill**, while the former at every step. ....

10. **Give up a member to save a family, a family to save a village, a village to save a country, and the country to save yourself.** ....

18. Fondle a son until he is five years of age, and use the **stick** for another ten years, but when he has attained his sixteenth year treat him as a friend.

19. He who **runs away** from a fearful calamity, a foreign invasion, a terrible famine, and the companionship of wicked men is **safe**.

20 He who has not acquired one of the following: religious merit (*dharma*), wealth (*ārtha*), satisfaction of desires (*kāma*), or liberation (*mokṣa*) is repeatedly born to die.

#### 3.6.2.4 Chapter Four

1. These five: the life-span, the type of work, wealth, learning and the time of one's **death** are **determined** while one is in the womb.

....

12. Religious austerities should be practiced alone, study by two, and singing by three. A journey should be undertaken by four, agriculture by five, and **war by many together**.

....

18. To wake at the proper time; to take a bold stand and **fight** ... are the four excellent things to be learned from a cock. ...

#### 3.6.2.5 Chapter Seven

10. **Conciliate** a strong man by submission, a wicked man by opposition, and the one whose **power** is equal to yours by politeness or force. [AWD: *Realpolitik*]

11. The **power of a king lies in his mighty arms**; that of a *brāhmaṇa* in his spiritual knowledge...

#### 3.6.2.6 Chapter Eight

8. Knowledge is lost without putting it into practice; a man is lost due to ignorance; an **army** is lost without a commander; and a woman is lost without a husband.

#### 3.6.2.7 Chapter Nine

7. The serpent, the king, the tiger, the stinging wasp, the small child, the dog owned by other people, and the fool: these seven ought not to be awakened from sleep.

9. He who neither rouses fear by his **anger**, nor confers a favour when he is pleased can neither control nor protect. What can he do?

10. The serpent may, without being poisonous, raise high its hood, but the **show of terror** is enough to frighten people -- whether he be venomous or not. [cf. deterrence]

#### 3.6.2.8 Chapter Ten

11. By **offending a kinsman, life is lost**; by offending others, wealth is lost; by offending the king, everything is lost; and by offending a *brāhmaṇa* one's whole family is ruined.

...

16. He who possesses **intelligence** is strong; how can the man that is unintelligent be powerful? The elephant of the forest having lost his senses by intoxication was tricked into a lake by a small rabbit. (this verse refers to a famous story from the *nīti-śāstra* called *pañcatantra* compiled by the pandit Vishnusharma 2500 years ago).

#### 3.6.2.9 Chapter Eleven

3. The elephant has a huge body but is controlled by the *ankuṣa*(goad): yet, is the goad as large as the elephant? A lighted candle banishes darkness: is the candle as vast as the darkness. A mountain is broken even by a thunderbolt: is the thunderbolt therefore as big as the mountain? No, he whose **power prevails** is really mighty; what is there in **bulk**?

....

15. The *brāhmaṇa* who thwarts the doings of others, who is hypocritical, selfish, and a deceitful hater, and while speaking mildly cherishes **cruelty** in his heart, is called a cat.
16. The *brāhmaṇa* who **destroys** a pond, a well, a tank, a garden and a temple is called a *mleccha*.

### 3.6.2.10 Chapter Twelve

3. Those men who are happy in this world, who are generous towards their relatives, kind to strangers, indifferent to the wicked, loving to the good, shrewd in their dealings with the base, frank with the learned, **courageous with enemies**, humble with elders and stern with the wife.

....

12. Our bodies are perishable, wealth is not at all permanent and **death is always nearby**. Therefore we must immediately engage in acts of merit.

....

20. The wise man should not be anxious about his food; he should be anxious to be engaged only in **dharma** (Kṛṣṇa consciousness).

### 3.6.2.11 Chapter Fourteen

9. We should always speak what would please the man of whom we **expect a favour**, like the hunter who sings sweetly when he desires to shoot a deer.

10. It is ruinous to be familiar with the king, fire, the religious preceptor, and a **woman**. To be altogether indifferent [to] them is to be deprived of the opportunity to benefit ourselves, hence our association with them must be from a **safe distance**.

### 3.6.2.12 Chapter Fifteen

3. There are two ways to get rid of thorns and **wicked** persons; using footwear in the first case and in the second **shaming** them so that they cannot raise their faces again thus keeping them at a distance.

### 3.6.2.13 Chapter Sixteen

11. I do not deserve that wealth which is to be attained by enduring much suffering, or by transgressing the rules of virtue, or by **flattering an enemy**.

...

16. It is better to die than to **preserve this life by incurring disgrace**. The loss of life causes but a moment's grief, but disgrace brings grief every day of one's life.

### 3.6.2.14 Chapter Seventeen

21. O *ketki* flower! Serpents live in your midst, you bear no edible fruits, your leaves are covered with thorns, you are crooked in growth, you thrive in mud, and you are not easily accessible. Still for your exceptional fragrance you are as dear as a kinsmen to others. Hence, a **single excellence** overcomes a multitude of blemishes.

## 3.7 The Rāmāyaṇa

The Rāmāyaṇa is one of the oldest and most revered epics in Sanskrit literature, still widely read and recited in large areas of South and South East Asia. The hero, *Rāmā*, is characterized as the ideal man and a valiant warrior. His deeds are therefore considered exemplary. There are times in the story, however, when he faces ethical dilemmas and his actions (including in battle) are questionable. These conundrums serve to enrich the story insofar as its treatment of

*dharmayuddha* (righteous war), making it more nuanced, and thus more realistic. Background on the evolving story in the Rāmāyaṇa is provided in *italics* between extracts below.

We are employing the translation of the epic rendered by the “Valmiki Ramayana Translation Project”, published by Princeton University Press, and based at Berkeley University (California, USA). Robert P. Goldman (Professor of Sanskrit, Berkeley University) is the director and general editor of this project. This print edition provides a rigorous scholarly version of the Rāmāyaṇa, though not all books of the epic have been completed by the project. For more detailed information about the project, visit [ramayana.berkeley.edu](http://ramayana.berkeley.edu).

To find passages relating to the use of force, the scripture was scanned visually. The passages are presented here in order of occurrence in the epic. For an analysis of them, see section 3.11 (“Valour & Virtue in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa: Were the Just War Criteria Prefigured in Ancient India?”).

### 3.7.1 Extracts from the Rāmāyaṇa

#### 3.7.1.1 Book I: Boyhood (Bālakāṇḍa)

##### Canto I: “The Tale of Rāma”

*This is the very introduction of the epic, where the ascetic Valmiki questions the sage Narada about the ideal human being.*

I.1.2-1.5, p.29:

Is there a man in the world today who is truly virtuous? Who is there who is **mighty** and yet knows both what is **right** and how to act upon it? Who always speaks truth and holds firmly to his vows? Who exemplifies **proper conduct** and is **benevolent** to all creatures? Who is learned, capable, and a pleasure to behold? Who is self-controlled having subdued his anger? Who is both **judicious** and free from envy? Who, when his **fury** is aroused in **battle**, is **feared** even by the gods?

*Narada names and describes Rāma at length. An excerpt of that description follows.*

I.1.10, p.29:

He is wise and grounded in **proper conduct**. Eloquent and majestic, he **annihilates his enemies**. His shoulders are broad and his arms mighty. His neck is like a conch shell and his jaws are powerful. His chest is vast, and, a **subduer of his enemies**, he wields a huge bow.

I.1.13, p.31:

Versed in the essence of the Veda and their subsidiary sciences, he is equally expert in the **science of arms**.

##### Cantos 5-7: “The Kingdom of Kośala”

*The following passage is part of a very lengthy description of Āyodhyā as the ideal kingdom, outlining in detail its civilizational heights as a utopic city.*

I.5.10, p.65:

It contained **every implement and weapon**, and was the resort of every artisan. It was majestic, unequalled in splendor, and thronged with bards and rhapsodists.

I.5.20-22, p.67:

King Daśratha had populated the entire city with **thousands of great chariot warriors**, both skilful and dexterous – men who would never loose their arrows upon a **foe** who was **isolated** from his comrades, the **sole support** of his family, in **hiding**, or in **flight**, but who slew with their **sharp weapons**, or even the strength of their bare hands, lions, tigers, and boars, bellowing with rage in the forest.

*The following passage is also part of the description of Kośala, but refers specifically to the ministers of Daśratha.*

I.7.09–7.12, p.75:

They were busy increasing the treasury and maintaining the **army** and would **not harm** even a hostile man, if he had done no **wrong**. Heroic, unflagging in energy, they put into practice the science of statecraft. They were the constant **protectors** of all honest inhabitants of the realm. They filled the treasury without injury to the Brahmans and kṣatriya-s and meted out strict punishment only after considering the relative gravity of a man's offense....That splendid city, and indeed the whole country, were at peace.

#### Cantos 14-16: "The Incarnation of Viṣṇu and the Vedic Gods"

*The gods address Viṣṇu just prior to his incarnation into Daśratha's household, just after we've learned of Rāvaṇa's threat to cosmic and worldly order, and the Boon he received from Brahma to be invincible against all gods, though failing to name man, the least of beings, who might pose a threat.*

I.14.17-22, p.117:

"In our desire for the welfare of the worlds, we shall set a task for you, Viṣṇu. Lord, King Daśratha, lord of Āyodhyā, is righteous, generous, and equal in power to the great seers. Viṣṇu, you must divide yourself into four parts and be born as the sons of his three wives, who are like Modesty, Majesty, and Fame. And when you have become a man, Viṣṇu, **you must kill Rāvaṇa in battle**, that mighty thorn in the side of the world, for he is invulnerable to the gods...for he is...a **terror to ascetics** and a source of **lamentation** to the world."

*This passage occurs after the wives of Daśratha consume the magical fertility-giving porridge. Prior to this, the queens were childless.*

I.16.1-16.5, p.123:

When Viṣṇu had gone off in preparation for his birth as the great king's son, Brahmā, the self-existent lord, said this to all the gods: "Create **powerful allies** able to take on any form at will to aid the hero Viṣṇu, for he is true to his promise and seeks our good common good. Let them be heroes with magic powers, whose swiftness shall rival that of the wind. They must be intelligent, well versed in **statecraft**, and equal in valor to Vishnu himself. Make them indestructible, well-versed in strategy,

and gifted with celestial bodies. They must be skilled in the use of all **weapons** as are the gods who feed on nectar.”

#### Cantos 17-29: “Rama’s Birth and Youthful Exploits”

*The great sage Viśvāmitra visits Daśratha’s court and asks for Rama, who is only 16, to accompany him on a mission to slay rakshasas (demons) who continually desecrate the sage’s sacrificial fire before the completion of the ritual. This is a common justification for killing, though it typically applies to demons and non-human beings. The following is an excerpt from Viśvāmitra’s appeal to King Daśratha.*

I.18.1-20, p.137-9:

“I am engaged in the performance of a ritual in order to accomplish a specific purpose. However, two **rākṣasa-s** who can take any form at will are obstructing me. Now in its final stages, when my sacrifice is all but complete, these rakshasas, Mārīca and Subāhu, who are powerful and well trained, have been **drenching the altar** with torrents of flesh and blood. Since my resolution to carry out this sacrifice has been frustrated in such a fashion, I came away in despair, all my efforts gone for nothing. Nor do I intend, your Majesty, to unleash my wrath upon them. For the ritual is such that I may **utter no curse** while it is in progress. Therefore, tiger among men, you must give me your eldest son, valorous Rama, who, though he still wears his side locks, is nonetheless a hero. For under my guardianship **he will be able to kill even those obstructive rākṣasa-s** through his own godlike power.”

*While en route to slay the rākṣasas Mārīca and Subāhu, Viśvāmitra tells Rāma the story of the she-demon Tātakā (mother of Mārīca) and how she came to be cursed. He urges Rama to kill her, though she is a woman. The following is an excerpt from Viśvāmitra’s motivational speech, justifying the slaughter of a woman.*

I.24.14-24, p.161-163:

“Therefore Rāghava, for the sake of cows and Brāhmaṇa-s, you must kill this utterly dreadful and wicked *yakṣa* woman whose valour is employed for **evil** purposes. No man but you in all the three worlds can **kill this accursed creature**, delight of the Raghus. Nor, best of men, should you be softhearted about **killing a woman**. A king’s son must **act for the welfare of the four great social orders**. This is the immemorial rule for all men charged with the burden of kingship. Katkustha, you must **kill this unrighteous creature**, for there is no righteousness in her. For it is said, protector of men, that long ago Shakra killed Manthara, the daughter of Virochana, who wished to destroy the earth. And long ago, Rama, the wife of Bhrigu, Kavya’s mother, firm in her vows, who wished to rid the world of Indra, was killed by Vishnu. These and many other excellent men **killed women** who were set in the ways of **unrighteousness**.”

*Rama addresses Lakshmana just as he is about to deliver the fatal blow to Maricha.*

I.29.18, p.181:

“I shall **kill these other pitiless and vicious rākṣasa-s**, for they are set in wicked ways, obstructing sacrifices, and drinking blood.”

*He then proceeds to kill Tātakā as well.*



## Cantos 49-64: “The Saga of Viśvāmitra”

*This is a subplot tale of the great duel between King Viśvāmitra and Sage Vasiṣṭha over the sage’s wish-granting cow, Śabalā. King Viśvāmitra repeatedly sought to purchase the cow from the Sage, offering various riches. The Sage refuses, to which the King responds by forcibly taking the cow. Śabalā, quite saddened for being ‘abandoned,’ appeals to the Sage, who replies as follows.*

I.53.12, p.285:

“I have not abandoned you, Śabalā, nor have you wronged me. This mighty king is **taking you from me by force**. My power is not equal to the king’s, especially today. For he is a **mighty kshatriya** monarch, the lord of the earth. There is **his full army** with hosts of horses and chariots, bristling with elephants and banners. By virtue of this, he is stronger than I.”

*It is the cow, Śabalā, who in the following passage wisely comforts the sage as follows, and in so doing, asserts the superiority of Brāhmāṇa power over kshatriya power, and thus, the superiority of spiritual attainment over brute force.*

I.53.14, p.285:

“They say that a **kṣatriya has no real power**, and that a Brahmin is, in fact, more powerful. Brahmin, the power of a Brahmin is divine and much greater than that of the kshatriyas. Your power is immeasurable. Viśvāmitra is very powerful, but he is not mightier than you. Your power is unassailable.”

*Śabalā aids Vasiṣṭha in conquering Viśvāmitra’s army, causing the king to seek divine aid. After much tapas to Lord Śiva, he is granted the knowledge he describes as follows*

I.54.16, p.289:

“If you are satisfied with me, great god without sin, then please teach me the **science of arms**...grant me knowledge of whatever weapons are known among [all beings]...”

*Armed with Shiva’s boon, Viśvāmitra descends unto Vasiṣṭha’s ashram, and destroys it, but Sage Vasiṣṭha, far from phased, responds as follows.*

I.55.3-4, p.291:

“Here I am you kṣatriya in name only. Let us see just how mighty you really are. Son of Gādhi, I shall crush your pride in your weapons. What comparison is there between **your kṣatriya power and the immense power of a Brāhmaṇa?** You are a disgrace to kṣatriya-s and shall now witness my divine Brāhmaṇa’s power.”

*The following speech marks the culmination of the duel between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha. Vasiṣṭha is ultimately defeated by sage’s staff, since it is imbued with spiritual power. Upon being defeated, he addresses his victor, Viśvāmitra in the following passage.*

I.55.22, p.295:

“**The power of the kṣatriya is no power at all.** Only the power of a Brāhmaṇa’s energy is power indeed. All my weapons have been destroyed by a single Brāhmaṇa’s staff. Therefore, when I have

reflected on this and calmed my mind and senses, I shall undertake great austerities, for this alone will make me a Brāhmaṇa.”

### 3.7.1.2 Book II: The City Āyodhyā (“Ayodhyakāṇḍa”)

#### Canto 1-6: “Rama as Prince Regent”

*At the very beginning of the Book, the virtues of Rāma, as a man, and as Prince Regent, are again extolled at length.*

II.1.15, p.37:

Rāma was always **even-tempered** and kind-spoken. Even if he were to be harshly addressed, he would not answer back. He would be satisfied with a single act of kindness, whatever its motive, and **would ignore a hundred injuries**, so great was his self-control. With good men – men advanced in years, virtue, and wisdom – he would converse at every opportunity, even **during breaks in his weapons practice**.

II.1.22, p.37-38:

He was proficient in training and riding horses and elephants, eminently knowledgeable in the science of **weapons**, and esteemed throughout the world as a master chariot fighter. He could head a charge and give **battle** and lead an **army** skillfully.

II.2.22, p.45:

He is proficient in the use of all the **weapons** of the gods, asuras, and men. Whenever he goes forth with Saumitri **to battle in defense** of a village or city, he always returns **triumphant**.

#### Canto 13-22: “Rama Submits”

*Queen Kaikeyī, upon coercion from her evil servant Mantharā, decides to request the two boons promised from King Daśratha years before. She asks that Rām, the son of another Queen, Kausalyā, be exiled and that her son, Bharata, is made king instead. This occurs on the very day of Rāma’s would-be coronation. Daśratha is heart-broken. Rāma arrives at the palace, prepared for his coronation when Kaikeyī delivers the spiteful news. Upon hearing his fate, Rāma responds in a remarkably non-combative manner. He appears not to care for his own political interest:*

II.16.26, p.121:

So be it. I shall go away to live in the forest, wearing matted hair and bark-cloth garments, to safeguard the promise of the king.

*Rāma leaves the court of Daśratha to inform his mother Kauśalyā, his younger brother Lakṣmaṇa, and his wife Sītā of his fate prior to leaving Ayodhya. Queen Kauśalyā is absolutely devastated. Lakshmana, outraged at the gross injustice taking place, proposes taking the kingdom by force.*

II.18.09, p.135:

[Lakshmana:] “Before anyone learns of this matter, let me help you **seize control** of the government. With me at your side, bow in hand to protect you, who could prevail against you, Raghava, when you

take your stand like Death itself? With my sharp arrows, bull among men, I will empty Ayodhya of men if it stands in opposition. I will **slaughter everyone** who sides with Bharata or champions his cause. **Leniency always ends in defeat.** Now that the king has provoked our implacable enmity, yours and mine, chastiser of foes, what power can he summon to bestow sovereignty on Bharata?”

*Upon hearing Lakshmana’s impassioned speech, Rama still insists on obeying his father, and leaving Ayodhya peacefully. In emphasizing the importance of paternal obedience, he cites an act of violence which resulted from a father’s command.*

II.18.25-30, p.137:

“It is not within my power to defy my father’s bidding. I bow my head in supplication; I wish to go to the forest. Even the wise seer Kandu, a man strict in his observances, **slew a cow at the bidding of his father**, for he knew that it was **right**. . . . Rama Jamad-agnya, at his father’s bidding, took an axe and by his own hand **butchered his mother** Renuka in the forest. So you see, it is not I alone who acts as his father instructs.”

*Rama directly addresses his brother’s proposal of violent action against the king. In so doing, he denounces violence, even construing it as opposed to righteousness [i.e. dharma] itself.*

II.18.32-36, p.137-8:

“I well know, Lakshmana, the profound affection you bear for me. But you fail to understand the real meaning of truth and **self-restraint**. Righteousness is paramount in the world, and on righteousness is truth founded. This command of father’s is based on righteousness and is absolute. Having once heard a father’s command, a mother’s, or a Brahman’s, one must not disregard it, my mighty brother, and it is at father’s bidding that Kaikeyi has coerced me. So give up this **ignoble notion that is based on the code of the kshatriya**; be of like mind with me and **base your actions on righteousness, not violence.**”

#### Canto 69-76: “Bharata Refuses the Throne”

*Sometime shortly after the king’s death, and after Bharata’s return to Ayodhya (he is visiting his maternal grandfather when all of these events take place), Shatrughna (the fourth of Daśratha’s sons) drags Manthara (the scheming hunchback, Kaikeyi’s servant and counsel) to the ground in a fit of rage. He continually threatens Kaikeyī all the while. Kaikeyi looks to Bharata, her son, for support, who says the following to Shatrughna.*

II.72.20, p.405:

[Bharata:] “If any creature is **not to be slain**, it is a **woman**. Forbear! I would kill this woman myself, this evil, wicked Kaikeyī, were it not that righteous Rāma would condemn me for **matricide**. If righteous Rāma were to learn that even this hunchback were slain, he would surely never speak to you or me again.”

#### Canto 88-103: “Rama is Resolved”

*Bharata initially refuses the throne, and searches out Rāma to offer him the kingdom. He finally finds him on Mt. Citrakūṭa. Lakshmana sees Bharata and his royal entourage from afar, and assumes that they have come to execute Rāma and himself in order to permanently secure the throne. Lakshmana, uncharacteristically vents his anger by threatening to harm both Bharata*

*and Kaikeyī. This malevolence is highly out of place for Lakshmana, and born of love for Rāma. Indeed the whole exchange appears to deal with the current family dynamic, though the general thrust of Rāma's teaching here – dispassion and disinterest – might be extrapolated and applied to a grander context. Further, in pacifying Lakshmana, Rāma seemingly prohibits the killing of one's family. This ties into the previous passage addressing matricide.*

II.90.15-25, p.491-492:

[Lākṣmana]: “There are men mounted on speeding horses drawing close at will, and how excited these riders appear mounted on the elephants. Let us take our bows and fall back to the mountain, my mighty brother, or make our stand right here, **armed for battle**, with our weapons at the ready...If only I could catch sight of Bharata, the cause of the great calamity that had befallen you, Rhagava, Sita, and me. Your enemy has arrived mighty Raghava, he who brought about your expulsion from the ancient kingship. It is Bharata, and I will **kill him**. **I see no wrong**, Raghava, in slaying Bharata. No unrighteousness comes from ridding oneself of a man who was **first to give offense**. When he has been struck down, you shall **rule** the whole treasure laden earth. If only that power-hungry woman, Kaikeyī could see her son killed by me today in combat – like a tree felled by an elephant – and feel the anguish of bitter sorrow. But no, I will **slay Kaikeyī** too, and her supporters and kismen. Let the earth be cleansed today of this foul scum! Today, o giver of honour, I will caste upon the enemy army my pent-up wrath and our dishonor, like fire upon dry grass. Today, I will rend the enemies' bodies with my sharp arrows, and spatter the woodlands of Chitra-kutra with their blood. And when my arrows have rent the hearts of their elephants and horses, let wild beasts drag them off, and the men, too, when I have cut them down. I have always discharged by debt to my bow and arrows in great battles, and I have no doubt I shall again in destroying Bharata and all his army.”

In an effort to calm Lakṣmaṇa Saumitri, who was so **violently agitated** and almost beside **himself with rage**, **Rāma** spoke these words: “What need is there of a bow or sword or shield, when it is the great archer, wise Bharata himself, who is coming? It is only to be expected that Bharata should wish to see us. He would not do us any harm, nor even contemplate it. When has Bharata ever opposed you, or made you any such threat that you should now have these suspicious of him? You must not speak disparagingly or abusively of Bharata. It is I who would be abused were any abuse directed against him. How, after all, **could a son kill his father, whatever the extremity, or a brother his brother**, Saumitri, his very own breath of life? If it is for the sake of kingship that you are saying these things, I shall tell Bharata when I see him, ‘Hand over the kingship to him.’ For were I plainly to tell him, Lakshmana, ‘Offer him the kingship,’ Bharata's only response would be ‘Of course.’”

*Bharata, in a lengthy speech, graciously deploras Rāma to return to Ayodhya and reign as king. He repeatedly invoked the timeless tradition of their lineage that the throne be succeeded by the firstborn. Rāma, however, is resolved to fulfill his father's word and remain in exile. Then, the Brahman Jabali presents Rāma with a skeptical argument, questioning the merits of ritual and asceticism, encouraging Rāma to pursue a life of worldly duty and enjoyment at the court (II.100.1-100.15), rather than succumbing to such superstitious notions contrived for the greed of Brahmans. Rāma, in turn, delivers a moving monologue extolling the supremacy of “truth” over all things, and affirming his faith in that truth (II.101.1-100.30). In so doing, he subversively rejects **kshatriya dharma**, though he, in effect, upholds it throughout the epic. Excerpts of that monologue follow.*

II.101.20 p.557:

“I reject the kshatriya’s code, where unrighteous and righteous go hand in hand, a code that only debased, vicious, covetous and evil men observe.”

II.101.31, pp.557-558:

“Those men who are earnest in righteousness and keep company with the wise, who are supremely generous, **nonviolent**, and free from taint, those supreme and mighty sages are the ones truly worthy of reverence in this world.”

### 3.7.1.3 Book III: The Forest (“Aranyakāṇḍa”)

#### Canto 1-10: “The First 10 Years of Exile”

*Upon entering into the wilderness, Rama encounters a community of ashrams where various ascetics dwell. They deliver a speech to Rama (as follows) which well outlines the social exchange between Brahmins and kshatriyas.*

III.1.17-21, p.39:

“As guardians of righteousness and glorious refuge of his people, a king is worthy of reverence and esteem. He is a guru who **wields the staff of punishment**. A king is a fourth part Indra himself and the **protector of his subjects**, Raghava. Therefore he enjoys the choicest luxuries and is held in honor by the world. We are residents of your realm and **need your protection**. Wherever you may find yourself, in city or forest, you are our king, the lord of the people. **We have renounced violence**, your majesty, and learned to control our senses and anger. **You must always protect us ascetics**, for we are as your children.”

*Rama encounters the demon Viradha who claims Sita for his own and threatens to devour Rāma and Lakshmana. Rama slays him in order to defend themselves and free the city from the demon’s embrace. We find out, after he is slain, that Viradha is actually the gandharva Tumburu, cursed to live as a vicious Rakshasa, destined to be freed from that life only upon being slain by Rāma. He then ascends to heaven. This episodes illustrates the acceptance of violent acts in the interest of self-defense and protection. (III.2.1 – 3.25, p.40-49)*

*The following passage includes an exchange where Rama exercises his Kshatriya duty to protect ascetics.*

III.5.08-5.20, p.57-58:

“We have come before you, great prince who know and cherish the ways of righteousness, and we must speak out because we are in need. Please forgive us for this, lord. It would be an act of unrighteousness, dear Rama, for a lord of the earth to take a sixth part in tax without **providing protection** as though to his sons. But he who strives constantly and energetically to **protect all who live in his realm** as though they were his own life, or sons dearer to him than life, secures long-lasting fame, Rama, for many years to come. He reaches the place of Brahma and even there is exalted. A king **who protects his subjects** as he rightly should acquires a fourth part of the supreme righteousness amassed by a sage who lives on nothing but roots and fruit. Here a great throng of forest hermits has gathered, Brahmins most of them. They are **being horribly slaughtered** by rakshasas, **undefended**, Rama, though you are present to **defend them**. Come see the bodies of the many purified sages slain in every imaginable way by dreaded rakshasas in the forest. The sages who

dwelt by the Pampa river and along the Madakini and those living on Mount Chitra-kuta are being butchered. We can tolerate no longer these terrible outrages that ferocious rakshasas are committing against ascetics in the forest. So we have taken **refuge** with you, our one sure place of refuge. **Save us, Rama, lest we be slaughtered** by the stalkers of the night.”

After hearing the distraught ascetics, the righteous prince Kakutstha said to them all, “You have no need to plead with me; I stand at the bidding of those in **distress**. It must have been to accomplish your purpose that chance has brought me here: My sojourn in the forest shall bear great fruit. **I am ready to slay in battle the rakshasas**, the enemies of ascetics.”

*In the following exchange, Sita presents her concerns about unprovoked violence, counseling her husband thus:*

III.8.2-12, p.67-69:

“Acquiring great righteousness requires the greatest care, and only he who avoids deliberate misdeeds can gain it in this world. As for deliberate misdeeds, there are just three. Telling lies is bad enough, but the other two, sexual intercourse with another man’s wife and **unprovoked violence**, are even worse. You have never been. Nor will you ever be, guilty of telling lies, Raghava. And how could you possibly lust after the wife of another man, an act that destroys righteousness? Both of these misdeeds can be avoided by those who have mastered their senses, and I know you can control your senses, my handsome husband. But the third one, **violence – the taking of life without provocation, and recklessly** – to this you may be prone. You have **promised to slay the rakshasas** in combat, my mighty husband, in order to protect the seers who live in Dandaka wilderness ...As I watch you setting out, my mind grows sick with worry, though thinking about your deeds usually brings me the greatest happiness. For I disapprove, my mighty husband, of going to Dandaka forest. I shall explain the reason why; just hear what I have to say. You and your brother are going to the forest bow and arrow in hand, and I fear the sight of any forest-dweller might cause you to shoot your arrows. For in this world a bow to a **kshatriya** is kindling to a fire: If it comes too close, his **power flares up wildly**. Once upon a time...”

*At this point Sita relays the tale (III.8.13-19) of an ascetic whom the God Indra, in order to hinder his ascetic practices, visits in the guise of a soldier and presents a sword as a gift. The sage becomes obsessed with the weapon, carrying it everywhere, even to gather roots and fruits. Indeed, “**from his constantly bearing the weapon, the ascetic’s heart by degrees turned violent**. And he forgot his ascetic vows. The sage took delight in **wanton violence**, became **reckless**, lured by unrighteousness, all because he lived with the weapon. Finally, he went to hell” (III.8.18-19).*

*Upon completion of the tale, Sita continues with her advice to Rama thus:*

III.8.20, p.71:

“...on **no account should you take up your bow and, unprovoked, turn your thoughts to killing rakshasas** of Dandaka. My mighty husband, I **disapprove of your killing creatures that have done no wrong**.”

*In what proceeds next, Sita artfully emphasized the tension between kshatriya dharma (violence), and Brahman dharma (non-violence), between kingship and asceticism, between the urban centers of polity and the recesses of forest life:*

III.8.22-25, p.71:

“Mighty kshatriyas, finding themselves in the forest inhabited by men who practice self-restraint, **need bows only for protecting those in distress.** How **incongruous they are, weapons and the forest, the kshatriya order and the practice of asceticism** – it is all so at odds. We must respect the customs of the place. **Wicked thoughts, my noble husband, can come from handling weapons.** When you are back in Ayodhya, you may follow the kshatriya code. But my joy would be unending, like that of my mother-in-law and father-in-law, should you renounce the kingship altogether and become a contented sage.”

*Rama replies by first expressing his appreciation for Sita’s sound advice, befitting her high birth, and righteousness. He then presents his counter-argument:*

III.9.4-7, p.71:

And yet, I may repeat the words that you yourself uttered, my lady: **‘kshatriya only bear bows lest any voice be raised in distress.’** And the sages undertaking strict vows in the Dandaka wilderness are indeed distressed, Sita. They themselves, the refuge of others, have taken refuge in me. Engaged in the practice of righteousness, they have been dwelling in the forest, living on fruit and roots, but now they are terrified at the savage rakshasas and can find no peace. Time and time again, while they are engaged in various penances in the forest, the ferocious rakshasas that **live on human flesh** come and devour them. So many were being devoured that the best of twice-born sages living in Dandaka wilderness came to me, saying, ‘Rescue us!’

*Rama continues at length to paraphrase the appeal presented to him by the forest-dwelling sages. Below is an interesting excerpt from his speech. He speaks here from the perspective of the endangered sages.*

III.9.12.15, p.72:

Ascetics:

“...‘True, **we could kill** the nightstalkers with our ascetic powers, but we are reluctant to squander what took so long to amass. Ascetic practice is ever beset by obstacle, Raghava, and so difficult to perform. That is why, although devoured by rakshasas, **we do not unleash our curse.** You and your brother, therefore, must protect us from oppression by the rakshasas who live in Dandaka wilderness, for you are our sole defender in the forest’

*Rama proceeds to indicate that he has already given his word that he would protect the sages, and, although, he would protect them anyhow, he could not possibly refrain from doing so upon having already given his word, since we would “sooner give his life” than break a promise, “especially to Brahmans.”*

#### Canto 11-14: “Transfer to Panchavati”

*Rama, having completed 10 years of his 14-year exile, seeks out the illustrious sage Agastya, who instructs him to relocate and set up his ashram at Panchavati, a highly inhabitable stretch of forest two leagues away, near the Godavari River, abundant in water, fruits, animals, birds, etc. Agastya also says*

III.12.20, p.103:

“Although accompanied by a wife, you are capable of protecting her. Then, too, Rama, living there **you can safeguard the ascetics.**”

#### Canto 15-29: “Shurpanakha’s Punishment and Revenge”

*Rama and company encounter the rakshasas woman, Shurpanakha, sister of Ravana. She is described as ugly, potbellied, beady-eyed, copper-haired, sinister-worded, ill mannered, and repellent (III.16.08-12, p.129). She “grew wild wish desire” for Rama, and made advances towards him, asking him to be her husband, calling Sita “ugly” and “unworthy” of Rama. In a playful exchange, Rama, offers his brother Lakshmana to her, who, in turn, declines, and suggest she become Rama’s junior wife. However, Shurpanakha, being a “potbellied, hideous creature, unused to teasing” (III.17.13, p.133), took the exchange seriously, stating,*

III.17.15-23, p.133

“It is on account of this mishappen slut, this hideous old wife with her pinched waist, that you care so little for me. I am going to devour this female at once, before your eyes; then, free of any rival, I shall live happily with you.”

And with this, she flew into a rage, and with eyes flashing like firebrands she shot toward the fawn-eyed princess, like a giant meteor toward the star Rohini. But as she was about to fall upon Sita, like the very noose of Death, mighty Rama angrily **restrained her** and said to Lakshmana:

“Never tease ignoble creatures, Saumitri. Look at Vaidehi, dear brother; she is frightened half to death. Now, tiger among men, **mutilate** this mishappen slut, this pot-bellied lustful rakshasas woman.”

So Rama spoke, the powerful Lakshmana, in full view of his brother, drew his sword and in a rage **cut off the creature’s ears and nose**. The dreadful Shurpanakha, her ears and nose hacked off, gave an earsplitting roar as she fled back into the forest the way she had come.

*Shurpanakha retreats into the forest, and relays the whole episode to her seething brother Khara. They both, enraged, plan to kill the humans. Shurpanakha says to her brother: “Now I long to **drink their blood** when they lie dead on the battlefield – her blood, that whore, and theirs. Dear brother, grant me this, my one and only wish: after the battle to drink her blood and theirs.” (III.18.15, p.137) In response, Khara summoned 14 powerful rakshasas and ordered them to kill Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita, and return with their corpses so that Shurpanakha may satiate her thirst for their blood. (III.18.17-20)*

*Raghava (Rama), seeing Shurpanakha return with reinforcement, asks Lakshmana to guard Sita while he slays them (III.19.4, 139). He addresses the rakshasa entourage thus:*

III.19.06-10, p.139:

“We are two sons of Daśratha, the brothers Rama and Lakshmana. Together with Sita we have entered the trackless Dandaka forest. We are self-controlled ascetics who subsist on fruits and roots and follow the ways of righteousness as we live in Dandaka wilderness. **Why do you threaten us with violence?** You are the evil creatures that have wrought havoc in the great forest. And at the direction of the seers, **I have come, bow in hand, to kill you**. Stay where you are wicked creatures, come no closer. And if you value your lives at all withdraw completely, stalkers of the night.”



*The fourteen thousand demons continue to attack him, but Rama slays them. Shurparnakha reports this to Khara. She then threatens to commit suicide if Khara doesn't kill him, goading Rama with insults of inferiority as a warrior. Her ploy succeeds in spurring Khara into action. He establishes an army of fourteen thousand rakshasas. Rama sees them coming, and has Lakshmana take Sita into the mountains for her protection. The battle is described in great detail, outlining much violence. Rama, "strung his awesome bow, drew shafts from his quiver, and filled himself with a violent rage to slay all the rakshasas" (III.23.25, p.159), which, miraculously, he eventually does. In his final speech to Khara, Rama declares,*

III.28.1-15, pp.177-178:

"...no one who is cruel, does evil deeds, makes creatures tremble, can long survive, not the lord of the three worlds himself. For **all unite to destroy one whose deeds are brutal and perverse**, nightstalker, just as when a vicious snake comes among them....savage creatures who do evil and are held in repugnance by the world do not long retain their power ...I come **as king, nightstalker**, to **end the life of evildoers and all who wish the world ill**. ...and slain in battle you and your army shall hasten after those righteous men you devoured in Dandaka wilderness."

*The exchange of bitter words and martial maneuvering continues at some length. One notable excerpt, voiced by Rama, follows, "When you [die] this Dandaka wilderness shall become a **place of refuge** for all in need of refuge. No more shall the sages fear to wander the forest...ever a thorn in the side of the Brahmins! Because of you the sages cast their oblations into the fire with fear" (III.29.8-10, p.181-182). Finally, Rama slays Khara after an intense battle, and then the seers come to declare that Rama has done what was required in order for the seers to "follow the way of righteousness at peace in Dandaka" (III.29.31, p.185).*

#### Canto 55-64: "Rama's Madness"

*Upon diverting Rama away from the ashram, the rākṣasa-king, Rāvaṇa, succeeds in abducting Sītā. When Rama returns, he turns mad with the anguish of separation from his beloved, threatening to unleash great harm, sending the world and all creatures into utter chaos with the force of his weapons (III.60.40-54, pp.359-361). Lakshmana consoles him thus [III.61.4, p.361:] "you have always been mild in the past, self-restrained, and dedicated to the welfare of all creatures. Do not abandon your true nature, yielding to rage. ... [III.61.9, p.363:] a lord of the earth must be gentle and cool-headed, and must **mete out just punishment**....[III.61.15-17, p.363:]. If you cannot recover Sita by peaceful means, by conciliation, tact, or diplomacy, **lord of men, then unleash the flood of your fold-feathered arrows**, as devastating as Indra's thunderbolts."*

### **3.7.1.4 Book IV: The City Kiṣkīṇḍā ("Kiṣkīṇḍākāṇḍa")**

#### Canto 14-18: "Rama Reproached"

*In this book, Rama encounters the monkey-men, including his great devotee Hanumān. Kishkinda, the realm of the monkeys is currently under the rule of Valin, who has exiled his younger brother Sugriva, due to a dispute (see Cantos 9, 10, "Hostility Between Brothers" for a detailed explanation of why and how the feud arose), and has taken possession of his wife, Tara.*

*Sugriva, is somehow considered the rightful king of the monkeys, and Rama, sympathetic to his loss of kingdom and wife, forges an alliance with him. It is noteworthy that although Valin had indeed banished Sugriva, and kidnapped Tara, both Tara and the kingship originally belonged to Valin! However, Rama has sided with Sugriva and has agreed to slay Valin for the sake of righteousness. However, he does so concealed at the sidelines, when Valin and Sugriva are engaged in battle. Rama's conduct is highly problematic (to engage an enemy while concealed) to the kshatriya dharma which Rama so staunchly upholds and exemplifies throughout the epic. He is reproached at great length by the dying Valin, highlights of which appear below.*

IV.17.13-45, pp.115-121:

“...What possible merit have you gained by killing me when I wasn't looking?...Since I didn't see you, I had no idea you would strike me when I was in the heat of battle with another...I did not know that your judgment was destroyed and that you were a vicious evildoer hiding under a banner of righteousness...**I did no harm in your kingdom or in your city, nor did I insult you; so why did you kill me...when I had joined battle here with someone else and was not fighting against you?**...What man, born in a kshatriya family, learned, free of doubts, and bearing signs of righteousness, would perform such a cruel deed?...Conciliation, generosity, forbearance, righteousness, truthfulness, steadiness, and courage, as well as **punishment of wrongdoers**, are the virtues of kings, your majesty...both statesmanship and restraint as well as punishing and rewarding are royal functions that must not be confused. Kings **must not act capriciously**...I have been killed by this mad elephant Rama, who has broken the fetters of good conduct, overstepped the laws of virtuous men, and disregarded the goad of lawfulness. If you had fought openly in battle, prince, I would have killed you...but I...have been struck down by you when you could not be seen...if what you have accomplished is proper, think of a good defense.”

*Rama's reply to the dying Valin is equally lengthy. His defense is essentially twofold: the dharma of a king is to punish evil, the dharma of an ally is loyalty. Also, more generally, Rama has already given his word, and thus must fulfill his promise. Rāma argues at the merits of the killing, not at how the killing was done. Rāma deals with ad bellum criteria not in bello.*

IV.18.4-39, pp.121-127:

“...This earth...belongs to the Ishvakus, as does **the right of punishing and rewarding** its beasts, birds, and men....we duly chastise whoever strays from the path of righteousness. But you violated righteousness and are condemned by your actions. You are engrossed in the pursuit of pleasures and have not kept to the path of kings....Learn therefore the reasons that I have killed you: You have forsaken everlasting morality and live in sin with your brother's wife...You acted according to your desires, monkey, and **in violating your brother's wife** you departed from righteousness. That is why this **punishment was administered** to you. Leader of monkey troops, I see no way other than punishment to chastise someone who is opposed to righteousness and deviates from universal order [and] custom. **Death is the punishment prescribed for a man who out of lust approaches his daughter, sister, or younger brother's wife**...my friendship with Sugriva is just like my friendship with Lakshmana. And for the sake of his wife and kingdom he is devoted to my highest good. Moreover, I made a **promise** at that time in the presence of other monkeys. And how can someone like me disregard a promise? Therefore...your chastisement must be viewed as righteous in every way. A person who keeps righteousness in view must assist his friend....**your death was decided upon justly**, tiger among monkeys: **we were not being arbitrary**....you who know nothing of righteousness and simply follow your passions, rebuke me for abiding by my sacred ancestral laws.”

*Valin therefore relents, persuaded by Rama's arguments.*

IV.18.41-45, p.128:

“Best of men, there is no doubt that what you have said is true...your immutable **judgment in determining crime and punishment is correct**. You know righteousness....”

*Rama replies to console the dying monkey.*

IV.18.53-56, p.131:

“You must not worry about us, or about yourself, best of monkeys, for we made our determination and regard to you according to the law. **Neither he who inflicts punishment on one who deserves punishment nor he who is punished when he deserves punishment perishes: Each serves the due process of justice**. Therefore freed from sin by meeting with this punishment, you have returned to your own righteous nature by the path determined by righteousness.”

#### Cantos 26-33: “Autumn Reminder”

*Months pass and Sugriva has yet to fulfill his end of his bargain with Rama, i.e., executing the search party for Sita. They had decided to proceed with the search by the end of the four-month rainy season, but the time comes, and still, Sugriva makes no stir. Rama becomes exceedingly worried and agitated, and sends Lakshmana to Sugriva with the following threat.*

IV.29.48-52, p.199:

“The path Valin traveled when he does is not closed. Stand by your agreement, Sugriva, lest you follow Valin’s path. I slew Valin alone with my arrow in battle. But **if you neglect your oath, I shall kill your entire family along with you....**Keep the promise you made, lord of monkeys, heeding the immemorial code of righteous conduct, lest I shoot you dead with my arrows and send you today to Yama’s abode to see Valin.”

*Lakshmana, saddened and outraged at Rama’s suffering, replies as follows.*

IV.30.2-6, p.201:

“The monkey will not keep to virtuous conduct. He will not keep in mind the connection between your efforts and his rewards. ...he has no inclination to repay your favor, warrior. Let him die and behold his brother Valin....**I cannot contain my violent anger. I shall kill faithless Sugriva today.**”

*Ironically, Rama, in beholding Lakshmana’s wrath, succeeds in diffusing his own wrath. He says to Lakshmana:*

IV.30.6-7, p.202:

“Surely someone like you should not do such evil in this world. He who **destroys evil by virtue** is a hero and the best of men. As a man of honorable conduct, Lakshmana, you must not choose this evil now. Pursue toward Sugriva that **affection and friendship** we previously followed. With **conciliatory words, avoiding harshness**, you must tell Sugriva that time has run out.”

*It is noteworthy that Lakshmana is nevertheless utterly enraged upon visiting Sugriva’s court. However, in line with the force of peacekeeping strategy, but he is ultimately pacified by Sugriva’s and Tara’s warm words, which their ministers advise them to deliver.*

### Canto 55-62: “Sampati’s Story”

*Sampatti, older brother of Rama’s vulture-ally Jatayus, mentions the following, in passing, while relaying his story to Hanuman and the monkey troops.*

IV.58.17, p.355:

“**Nobody** anywhere, even among the most despicable, **attacks those who are conciliatory.**”

### **3.7.1.5 Book V: The Book of Beauty (“Sundarakāṇḍa”)**

#### Canto 2-12: “The Citadel of Lanka”

*Hanuman, a vānara (monkey-man), and intense devotee of Rāma, has just taken his great leap over the Southern ocean in order to enter Lanka, the island-city over which Ravana reigns supreme. Hanuman, wholly engaged in internal dialogue, refers to the four progressive means of conflict resolution – conciliation, bribery, dissension, warfare<sup>117</sup>.*

V.2.28, p.75:

“When it comes to the **rakshasas**, there is no scope for **conciliation**, nor is there any scope for **bribery**, **sowing dissension**, or open **warfare.**”

#### Canto 28-38: “Sītā confides in Hanumān”

*Hanumān mused to himself about the battle to come for Sītā which will inevitably ensue, fantasizing about his prowess and potential victories. In his deliberations, Hanuman questions the sensibility of battle.*

V.28.35, p.261:

“Then again, **battle is an uncertain business**, and I do not like uncertainty. For what intelligent person would unreflecting engage in an affair whose **outcome is uncertain?**”

#### Canto 39-45: “Havoc in Rāvana’s Grove”

*Upon his exchange with Sītā, and completion of his primary mission, Hanumān engages in internal reflection on the situation with the rakshasas. He considers force as the last resort, having dismissed the three other options. He also decides to assign himself a secondary mission while in Lāṅkā: he devises a ploy to engage the enemy in combat so as to assess their strength.*

V.39.1-17 pp.343-45:

“I have found the black-eyed lady [i.e., Sītā]. But some small thing still remains to be done. In this case, aside from the first three strategies, the fourth alone prevents itself. **Conciliation** does not yield good results in the case of the rakshasas, nor are **gifts** appropriate in the case of those who have amassed great wealth. **Dissension** can have no effect on people who are proud of their strength. **Physical force** alone presents itself to me in this case.

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<sup>117</sup> See 4.30.7 (pg 18 here); 4.58.17 (pg 18 here); 5.2.28 (pg 19 here); 5.39.1 (pg 19 here)

Indeed, no resolution other than **physical force** will be possible in this matter. However, if a few of their **champions were killed** somehow or other in battle right now, then the rākṣasa-s might be made more pliant. If a person who is entrusted with a specific mission accomplished other things without compromising his specific mission, then that person is truly worthy of undertaking such a mission. Many means must be undertaken to accomplish even the most trivial task. And only he who understands this **multiplicity of means** is truly capable of effectively accomplishing his purpose. If now, having accomplished my primary objective, I could make a clear **determination of the strength of the enemy's forces** compared to our own before returning to the home of the lord of monkeys, I would then have fully carried out my master's orders. How can I most easily **start a violent battle** right now between the rākṣasa-s and myself so that ten-faced Rāvaṇa will throw his most powerful forces against me in combat?

Here is a grove belonging to that vicious monster [i.e., Rāvaṇa]. It is magnificent and it resembles Indra's Nandana grove itself. For it is delightful to the eye and the heart, and it is filled with every sort of tree and climbing vine. I shall destroy it as thoroughly as a fire destroys a dry forest. When it has been devastated, Rāvaṇa will be furious. Then the lord of the Rākṣasa-s will send forth a great army equipped with tridents and iron spears, and including cavalry, chariots and elephants. There will be a **huge battle**. When I meet in battle with those rākṣasa-s, fierce in their valor, **I will destroy the force sent by Rāvaṇa, for my valor is unstoppable**. Then I can easily proceed to the abode of the monkey king [i.e., Kiṣkiṇḍā].”

*The mighty monkey proceeds to thoroughly devastate that splendid grove.*

V.39.19, p.345:

Once the great monkey had done this thing – so unwelcome to the mind of that great king [i.e., Rāvaṇa] – he stationed himself; blazing with splendour, at the gateway, **eager to do battle** all alone against many powerful foes.

*Rākṣasa forces, eighty thousand in number, soon descend to his location, and he defeats them in battle, then proceeds to further devastate the area surrounding the grove.*

#### Canto 46-54: “Hanuman in Bondage”

*Hanumān eventually allows himself to be captured and dragged to the court of Rāvaṇa. Interestingly, he cites self-defense as his justification for killing several warriors, who had attacked him after he destroyed Rāvaṇa's grove.*

V.48.12, p.401:

“Since it is so difficult to obtain an audience with the lord of the rakshasas, I destroyed the rakshasas king's grove in order to get one. Then those powerful rakshasas came, spoiling for a fight. I only fought back in **self-defense**.”

*The captive Hanumān proceeds to perform his duties as an emissary by reasoning with the demon-king, then foretells the king's destruction once Rāma and his troops unleash their wrath upon Laṅkā. Rāvaṇa decides to execute him for his audacity. Vibishana, Ravana's brother and minister, reminds him that violence is an inappropriate response for an emissary.*

V.50.5-10, p.409:

[Vibishana:] “Your majesty, the execution of this monkey would not become you. For, mighty king, it would be both contrary to righteousness and censurable from the point of view of the conduct of worldly affairs. Undoubtedly he has proved to be a great enemy, for he was wrought unparalleled offense. Nonetheless, the virtuous **do not advocate killing an emissary**...let your rod of punishment fall instead upon those who have sent him....**a messenger never deserves death.**”

*Rāvaṇa relents to Vibishana’s counsel, admitting that “to kill a messenger is indeed reprehensible” (51.2, p.413) and decides instead to punish Hanumān. Note that, in the king’s view, his punishment is commensurate to his crime: setting Hanuman’s tail on fire.*

“However, **some punishment other than death** must be inflicted upon him. It is said that the tail is the monkey’s most cherished possession. Therefore let his be set alight immediately...let all his kinsmen and relations, his friends and those dear to him, see him dejected and drawn by the disfigurement of his tail.”

#### Cantos 55-66: “Return to Kishkinda”

*Upon returning to Kishkinda, Hanumān summarizes his experiences in Laṅkā for the other monkeys. He includes, in his account, a synopsis of what took place at the court of Rāvaṇa. Hanumān paraphrases Vibishana’s intervention of Rāvaṇa’s order to execute Hanumān as follows.*

V.56.130, p.461:

“The **execution** of an **emissary** is **not sanctioned** in the treatises on kingship, rakshasas. An emissary bearing a beneficial message must convey it accurately. O you whose valor is unequaled, **when an emissary has committed some grave offense**, then, according to the treatises, **only disfigurement is sanctioned, never execution.**”

### **3.7.1.6 Book VI: The War (“Yuddhakāṇḍa”)**

*After Hanumān leaves Lankā, Ravana consults his ministers, who all advise him to destroy Rāma. Vibhīṣana, however, counsels otherwise (Yuddha VI.9, 10, 11, pp.272-3):*

VI.9.8. “The learned have prescribed as appropriate the use of **force** only on those occasions where one’s objective cannot be achieved by means of the **other three stratagems**, dear brother.

9. “And, dear brother, the use of force, when made judiciously and in accordance with the proper injunctions, succeeds only against those who are off guard, preoccupied, or stricken by misfortune...

12. “By no means, night roaming rākṣasas, should we rashly underestimate our foes; for their forces and valour are immeasurable.

13. “And what offence had Rāma previously committed against the king of the rākṣasas that the latter should have abducted that illustrious man’s wife from Janasthāna?

14. “Even if Rāma did kill Khara, who was attacking him, in battle, still, all living creatures must strive to the limit of their strength to **save their own lives.**

15. “For this reason Vaidehī constitutes a grave danger to us. She who has been abducted must be surrendered. There is no point in acting merely to provoke a quarrel.

16. “It would therefore not be appropriate for us to engage in pointless hostility with this powerful and righteous man. You must give Maithilī back to him....

19. “If you do not of your own free will give back Rāma’s beloved wife, the city of Laṅkā and all of its valiant *rakṣasas* will surely perish.

20. “As your kinsman, I beseech you. Do as I say. What I am telling you is both salutary and beneficial. You must give Maithilī back to him...

22. “Give up your wrath, so destructive of both happiness and righteousness. Practice righteousness, which is conducive to pleasures and fame. Calm yourself, that we may survive together with our sons and kinsmen. You must give Maithilī back to Dāśratha.”

*Rāvaṇa was not dissuaded since he “had resolved on war” (273). Vibhīṣana repeatedly tries to dissuade Rāvaṇa and his entourage, but to no avail. He eventually defects to Rāma’s vānara army. Upon hearing his case, Rāma declares that, (Yuddha VI.17-18, p.277):*

*Again, on the very cusp of warfare, when Rāma and his forces have bridged the ocean and entered Laṅkā, Malayavān, Rāvaṇa’s minister and maternal grandfather, eloquently reiterates the same advice (Yudha VI.35-36, pp.287-8):*

VI.26.6 “Your majesty, a king who is well versed in the traditional branches of learning and who acts in accordance with sound policy will long exercise sovereignty and bring his foes under his power.

7. “And if he makes peace or war with his enemies at the appropriate times and strengthens his own side, he will this enjoy broader sovereignty.

8. “A king who is weaker than his rival or equal to him in strength should sue for peace. Only one who is stronger should make war, but even he must never underestimate his enemy.

9. “Therefore, Rāvaṇa, I would recommend making peace with Rāma. You should give him back Sītā on whose account we are so heavily besieged.

10. “All of the gods, seers, and gandharvas desire Rāma’s victory. Therefore you should not oppose him. You should chose to make peace with him...

31. “We truly believe that Rāma is none other than Viṣṇu, who has taken the body of a man. For this Rāghava, so firm in his valor, is surely no ordinary human.

32. “Therefore, Rāvaṇa, you should make peace with Rāma, the king of men, who built that utterly extraordinary bridge across the ocean.”

*The battle raged on, causing much death, destruction, and devastation on each side. Upon enduring heavy losses to his entourage and resources, Rāvaṇa decides to awaken the giant Kumbhakarna, soliciting his aid in the fight. The awakened giant reprimands the demon king, stating:*

VI.51.2. “Since you paid no heed to those who had your welfare at heart, you have now met with that very calamity that we foresaw earlier, at the council of ministers.

3. “You are suffering the immediate consequence of your wicked deed, just as evildoers suffer an instant descent into their respective hells.

4. “You carried out this action, your majesty, without first reflecting upon it. In the sheer arrogance of your strength, you did not consider the consequences.

5. “A person who, relying upon his royal authority, does later what ought to be done first, and first what out to be done later, has no comprehension of the distinction between sound and unsound policy.
6. “Actions that are performed in inverted order, without reference to the proper time and place, are harmful, just as offerings of food to impious persons.
7. “A king who perceives the fivefold application of the of the three types of action after coming to a decision with his ministers remains on the proper path.
8. “So does a king who desires to reach decision in conformance with the texts on polity, who pays heed to his ministers, and who recognizes his true friends by virtue of his own intelligence.
9. “A man should pursue all three human ends – righteousness, profit and pleasure – at their proper times, lord of the *rākṣasas*, either all at once or two at a time.
10. “And a king or one exercising royal power who leans which among these is foremost and yet does not take it to heart finds all his great learning to be in vain.
- 11-12. “But foremost among *rākṣasas*, the self-possessed monarch should consult with his ministers concerning the timely use of bribery, conciliation, sowing dissension, coercive force, or any combination of these means, as well as the proper and improper ways of applying them. He who does so and practices righteousness, profit, and pleasure at their appropriate times never comes to grief in this world.
13. “And the king who, together with ministers who understand the true nature of things and have this interest at heart, deliberates over what he ought and ought not to do in this world in order to achieve a beneficial result thrives.
14. “There are some men – dumb brutes, in fact – utterly ignorant of the import of the śāstras, who, once they are brought into discussion of policy, wish to speak out of sheer arrogance.
15. “One should not follow the pernicious advice of those who are ignorant of the śāstras, and unfamiliar with the treatises on statecraft, and simply eager to enhance their own positions.
16. “And those men who undermine all undertakings by foolishly uttering in their insolence pernicious advice that only seems beneficial should, after careful examination, be excluded from discussions of policy...
20. “And so a king who underestimates his enemy and fails to protect himself meets with calamities and falls from his lofty state.

*At a later point in the great war, Rāma is about to engage Indrajit, the son of Rāvaṇa when Lakṣmana makes some tactical suggestions. Rāma expresses his disapproval in the following exchange (Yudha VI.80-81, p.321) giving in bello criteria:*

“You cannot kill all of the demons for the sake of one of them, O Lakṣmana. You should not kill in battle one who does not fight, who is hidden, who comes to you with joined palms, one who seeks your asylum, one who is running away, or one who is dazed.”

*Indrajit threatens the life of a magically-produced clone of Sītā in front of Rāma. Hanuman admonishes that “the killing of a woman is universally condemned”.*

*Indrajit however, being debased, shirks away from any noble warrior conduct, exclaiming, “How true, O vānara! But, in war one can do whatever might annoy the enemy. It is for her sake that you have all invaded Lāṅkā; I shall thwart your purposes by killing [Sītā].” It is clear that the ‘anything goes in war’ attitude is not shared by the others.*



*Rāma eventually slays Indrajit. Rāvaṇa, greatly angered at the loss of his son, attempts to slay the real Sītā. His minister Supārśva succeeds in diffusing his anger, dissuading him with the following counsel (Yuddha VI.93-94, p.327):*

“O King, pray do not yield to anger and commit this heinous crime. **Killing a woman is entirely unworthy of your greatness.** You have fulfilled all the vows of a brāhmaṇa of Vedic learning; and you are devoted to your own duties. **How then do you contemplate the killing of a woman?** Turn your anger to Rāma, and you will kill him without doubt; and then you can make Sītā your consort!”

*Upon the slaying of Rāvaṇa, Vibīṣaṇa expresses his heartfelt desire to perform proper funeral rites for his departed brother. However, he also expresses doubt, fearing the people’s contempt for him for honoring the demon-king. Rāma soothes his concerns stating (Yuddha 114, p.339):*

“**Hostility ends with death.** He is your brother and he is mine too. Let the funeral rites proceed.”

*Once the war was completely over, Hanumān seeks out Sītā in Rāvaṇa’s grove. Prior to finally rescuing her, Hanumān says:*

VI.101.23 “However, if you permit me, I should like to **kill** all these *rākṣasa* women who previously threatened you.

24-35. “Please grant me this wish. These cruel and horrible rākṣasa women, with their dreadful rumours, their fierce glances, and terrifying threats, tormented you, who are so devoted to your husband, when you were suffering in the aśoka grove. I would really like to slaughter them with different types of blows....”

*Sītā replies:*

30. “Who, foremost of monkeys, could be angry at servant women, for, as mere functionaries and dependent on the king, they are **obedient** and act only on the orders of another.

31. “It is as a consequence of my evil destiny and **my own misdeeds** in the past that I have suffered all of this. For one always experiences the fruit of one’s actions.

*The ideal of peace and compassion is again reiterated by Sītā who sagaciously quotes śāstra as follows:*

34. “There is an ancient verse in keeping with righteousness that a bear once recited in the presence of a tiger. Hear it now from me, leaping monkey.

35. “ ‘A superior person never requites evil on the part of evildoers with evil.’ This rule of conduct must always be adhered to. For **good conduct** is the ornament of the virtuous.

36. “A noble person must act **compassionately** whether people are wicked, virtuous, or even deserving of death. For, leaping monkey, no one is entirely innocent.

37. “One should **not harm** rākṣasas, who can take on any form at will and take pleasure in injuring people, even when they do evil.”

*Rāma's return to Ayodhya and subsequent coronation inaugurates his utopic reign in Ayodhya. Among the many virtues of this newly consecrated regime, described at length, (Yudha VI.131, p.350) "there was no theft, no robbery, **nor any violence**".*

### 3.7.1.7 Book VII: The Last Book ("Uttarakāṇḍa")

*At some point in his reign, Rāma wishes to perform a religious rite to secure merit. He proposes performing the Rajasuya ritual, however Bharata counsels him against it (Uttara VII.83, p.396): "The Rājasuya is **fraught with conflict with kings**, subduing them, and such **acts of violence**....Hence give up the idea of performing [this] rite."*

Rāma agrees, stating:

*"I am delighted with your brave words of wisdom, O Bharata. I have given up the idea of performing the Rājasuya rite which **does involve one in some violence**. Surely **good men should not engage themselves in actions which involve harm or suffering to living beings**."*

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## 3.8 Śrīmad Bhāgavatam: Reasons and rules for fighting

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (aka *Bhāgavad Purāna*)<sup>118</sup> is the second great Indian epic (after the *Mahābhārata*) attributed to the sage Veda Vyāsa, and is said to have been written after the *Mahābhārata*. It covers the various *avatār* incarnations of the god Viṣṇu, including the

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<sup>118</sup> Bhāgavatam will be used interchangeably with "Bhagavatam" (no diacritics).

incarnation as Krishna (Kṛṣṇa in International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration). It contains many scenes of battle and fighting by both virtuous and evil characters. Thus, it provides not only some explicit guidelines on the use of force but an abundance of examples on how to fight righteously. However, according to Hindu tradition, the actions of an *avatār* are often, but not always, comprehensible to the human mind so not all of this epic's use of force or weapons can be interpreted as applicable to human affairs.

The translation for this study used was the “non-concatenated” version of Swāmi Prabhupāda (1987) and his pupils, with foreword by Anand Aadhar Prabhu of Enschede, The Netherlands (dated 28 May 2000). The text was obtained online as a 726-page document (Microsoft Word format, in WinZip, 1.3 Mb), available at [www.srimadbhagavatam.org/treasury/downloads.html](http://www.srimadbhagavatam.org/treasury/downloads.html).

The text was searched using the keywords: “fight” (172 instances of word use in scripture) and “kill” (795 instances). Other terms (such as “weapon”, “war”) could be added in future searches in an attempt at a more comprehensive review. The format for referencing passages is: canto, chapter, verse(s) (e.g., 1.2.3). Bold font is used to highlight the more relevant passages, while even more crucial passages are both underlined and bolded.

### 3.8.1 Summary

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* recounts stories of wars, battles, fighting and killing, and involves divine beings and hostile forces (*asuras*) as well as human beings. The text provides some normative guidelines for such uses of armed force in ancient Indian society, with extension to other lands and time periods where the scripture has been valued and its characters upheld as models.

Importantly, the *Bhāgavatam* specifies when killing is *not* permitted. It holds that: “A person who knows the principles of religion does not kill an enemy who is careless, intoxicated, insane, asleep, afraid or devoid of his chariot. Nor does he kill a boy, a woman, a foolish creature or a surrendered soul.”<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, “the devotees of the Lord are so forbearing that even though they are defamed, cheated, cursed, disturbed, neglected or even killed, they are never inclined to avenge themselves” (1.8.48). While the *Bhāgavatam* is full of examples of revenge, it also contains many instances of great mercy and compassion.

The story of Aśvatthāma (13-14) is illustrative of generous compassion after great atrocity. This son of Dronācārya committed the unspeakable crime of beheading the five sons of his enemies (the sons of the Pandavas and their wife Queen Draupadī) while the children were asleep in their tents. Even Aśvatthāma's leader, Duryodhana, was not pleased with this stealthy nighttime act which violated the rules of warfare. After Aśvatthāma is captured, Arjuna must decide whether to kill him or not. At first, the incarnation Kṛṣṇa says Aśvatthāma should be killed immediately for such a heinous crime. Kṛṣṇa reminds Arjuna of his promise to Draupadī to bring to her the head of the killer of her sons. When Aśvatthāma is soon brought before her, however, Draupadī shows considerable compassion. She says she does not want Aśvatthāma's mother to suffer in the same way as she did as a mother. Furthermore, she argues for restraints so that the “the kingly

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<sup>119</sup> Also, see passage: “The King thus said: We have inherited the fame of Arjuna; therefore since you have surrendered yourself with folded hands you need not fear for your life.” (1.17.31)

administrative order” does not offend the “brāhmaṇa order” (the caste to which Aśvatthāma and his father Dronācārya belonged).

King Yudhiṣṭhira supports the statements of the Queen, as they were “in accordance with the principles of religion and were justified, glorious, full of mercy and equity, and without duplicity.”(1.7.49) Kṛṣṇa then gave an equivocal order to Arjuna, saying: “A friend of a brāhmaṇa is not to be killed, but if he is an aggressor he must be killed. All these rulings are in the scriptures, and you should act accordingly.” Arjuna understood the motive of Kṛṣṇa, and spared Aśvatthāma’s life, punishing him only through humiliation. He severed both hair and special jewels from the villain’s head. The text also states that Aśvatthāma “had already lost his bodily luster due to [his acts of] infanticide, and now, moreover, having lost the jewel from his head, he lost even more strength.” (1.7.56) Then he was unbound and driven out of the camp. This was sufficient: “Cutting the hair from his head, depriving him of his wealth and driving him from his residence are the prescribed punishments for the relative of a brahmana. There is no injunction for killing the body” (1.7.57).

In general, killing relatives is not permitted in the text; the acceptable alternative is rejection from the family, as Balarāma states when Kṛṣṇa intends to kill Rukminī (10.54.39). However, there is contrary advice in the following passage: “The code of sacred duty for warriors established by Lord Brahmā enjoins that one may have to kill even his own brother. That is indeed a most dreadful law”(10.54.40).

The *Bhāgavatam* contains many criticisms of those who resort to fighting and conquest for selfish reasons. This includes great heroes and political leaders who fight “due to their ignorance” (5.13.15) and due to their inability to take up the spiritual path. Such fighting by those who have no faith in God (2.7.26) overburdens the world and may force God to descend to earth in “His plenary portion” (i.e., *avātar* form, such as Kṛṣṇa).

It is wrong to show rash eagerness for fighting (11.25.2-5). In the Kali yuga (the age in which the world now finds itself according to Hindu astrology) people tend to be greedy, ill-behaved and merciless, and they fight one another without good reason. Unfortunate and obsessed with material desires, the people of Kali-yuga are “almost all śūdras and barbarians” (12.3.25).

The *Bhāgavatam* puts great emphasis on fighting only among equals, since fighting with someone of lesser strength or skill is considered extremely dishonorable. For instance, the demon Jarāsaṃdha refuses to fight with Kṛṣṇa because he considers him a coward (10.72.31), as demonstrated by Kṛṣṇa fleeing a previous battle to seek refuge in his city in the sea. Similarly, Jarāsaṃdha considers Arjuna not old or strong enough or a match in any other way (10.72.32). On the other hand, the strongest of the Pāṇḍavas, Bhīma is considered a worthy contender (10.72.33). Jarāsaṃdha hands Bhīma a huge club and they fight “man-to-man” on chosen ground, presenting “a magnificent spectacle.” [The stronger Bhīma wins but only after many days of fighting.]

Ironically, Balarāma cites the equality of two fighters, Duryodhana and Bhīma (both being his former students), as a reason for them *not* to fight (10.79.25). Balarāma says: “Since you are so evenly matched in fighting prowess, I do not see how either of you can win or lose this duel. Therefore please stop this useless battle” (10.79.27). The two did not accept Balarāma’s request,

because of their mutual enmity, “each of them constantly remembered the insults and injuries he had suffered from the other.” (10.79.28).

The *Bhāgavatam* also restricts the killing of animals: “One is not allowed to kill animals unnecessarily or without restrictions. The Vedas regulate animal-killing to stop the extravagance of foolish men influenced by the modes of passion and ignorance” (4.26). But “even saintly persons take pleasure in the killing of a scorpion or a snake” (7.9.14).

Even the virtuous victor in a battle can be haunted by fear of *adharma* (violations of the moral and spiritual code of conduct). After the battle of Kurukṣetra, King Yudhiṣṭhira, the human embodiment of Dharma (being the son of the god Dharma), feels extremely guilty. He laments: “I have killed many boys, brāhmaṇas, well-wishers, friends, parents, preceptors and brothers. Though I live millions of years, I will not be relieved from the hell that awaits me for all these sins” (1.8.47). In the end King Yudhiṣṭhira performs the horse sacrifice to “get freed from sins incurred from fighting with kinsmen” (1.12.32).

Even killing an enemy who is afraid of losing his life or running away in fear is “never glorious, nor can it promote one to the heavenly planets” (6.11.4). To kill a brahmana who is a saintly and sinless person, versed in Vedic knowledge, would be “like destroying the embryo within the womb or killing a cow” (9.9.30). But even more “severely sinful” is to kill a “king who is an emperor” (9.15.41)<sup>120</sup>

But grace is possible for heinous crimes, even the worst ones like killing a brāhmaṇa, a cow, a close relative or a spiritual master (6.13.8-9). The chanting of the name of the Lord can free such sinners from the karmic reaction. King Indra, after killing a brāhmaṇa, practiced austerities and worshiped the god Viṣṇu for a thousand years to be ultimately relieved of all the reactions of his sinful deeds (6.13.7).

But the punishments for inappropriate killing can be severe: an afterlife in various forms of hell. Violent acts committed by “envious persons against living entities” may send the violator to a hell where those living entities hurt by him appear as animals (called *rurus*) to inflict very severe pain (Raurava hell, 5.26.11). Cruel persons who cook poor animals and birds alive may be carried by the Yamadutas to a hell where they are “cooked in boiling oil” (Kumbhipaka hell, 5.26.12).<sup>121</sup> For the great crime of killing a brahmana, the criminal may find himself burned by hot copper, heated by fire and scorching sun, for “as many thousands of years as there are hairs on the body of an animal” (Kalasutra hell, 5.26.x).

Valid reasons to fight and kill are also proposed. For instance, Brahmā asks Viṣṇu to kill a sinful demon “before the demonic hour arrives and he presents another formidable approach [attack]” (3.18.25). This is self-defence, though that word is not used in the *Bhāgavatam*. To prevent “the darkest evening,” which will soon cover the world, [Viṣṇu] “should win victory for the

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<sup>120</sup> However, Kṛṣṇa is allowed to act exceptionally. He did kill his uncle, the King Kāṁsa, “which is not at all sanctioned in the sastras” but did so for the benefit of the earth (10.1.10).

<sup>121</sup> Also: “Those sinful persons who are ignorant of actual religious principles, yet consider themselves to be completely pious, without compunction commit violence against innocent *animals* who are fully trusting in them. In their next lives, such sinful persons will be eaten by the same creatures they have killed in this world” (11.5.14).

demigods” (3.18.26). But the rationale for killing goes much further in the King Prthu’s reply to the earthly Planet in form of a cow: “Any cruel person—be he a man, woman or impotent eunuch—who is only interested in his personal maintenance and has no compassion for other living entities may be killed by the king” (4.17.26).

Using force to seize a bride was considered honourable in the *Bhāgavatam*. For instance, Arjuna whisked the willing Subhadrā out of her family palace in the face of valiant fighters and palace guards blocking his way (10.86.10). Though he could peacefully have gained her hand in marriage with Kṛṣṇa’s permission, the two concocted this scheme to steal her, as this was considered more noble. Arjuna took Subhadrā away “as a lion takes his prey from the midst of lesser animals,” with Kṛṣṇa resorting to stalling tactics so that the pursuers would not succeed. (10.86.10).

While the killing of relatives is considered abominable and an irreligious activity, Kṛṣṇa does convince Arjuna to overcome this moral inhibition (11.16.7). He uses many arguments, emotional, moral and spiritual (see *Bhāgavad-Gītā* summary). In the end, Kṛṣṇa resorts to showing Arjuna his Cosmic Form, to raise Arjuna’s consciousness and make him aware that Kṛṣṇa is the “the Supersoul of all living entities, their well-wisher and supreme controller” and “the maintainer and annihilator of all entities”( 11.16.9).

In the *Bhāgavatam*, Kṛṣṇa not only encourages others to fight but he also fights and kills many demons and humans himself. Even as a baby, Kṛṣṇa thwarts the plots of Kāṁsa and his demonic henchmen to kill Kṛṣṇa. He sucks out the demoness Putana’s life breath along with her breast milk, breaks the cart-demon Sakatasura, overpowers the whirlwind-demon Trnavarta and kills Bakasura, Vatsasura and Aghasura. Along with his brother Balarāma, he kills the demon Dhenukasura and his companions. He easily disposes of the foolish demons Sankhacuda, Arista and horse-demon Kesi and magician-demon Vyoma in what are considered the “pastimes” of Kṛṣṇa’s childhood. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma also kill the elephant Kuvalayapida, the wrestlers Mustika and Canura, and their evil uncle King Kāṁsa.

After childhood, Kṛṣṇa annihilates the armies brought by Jarāsaṁdha, and kills the barbarian king Kālayavana. Furthermore, the *Bhāgavatam* relates how “Lord Kṛṣṇa, in the battle with Baṇāsura, defeated Lord Śiva by making him yawn, how the god cut off Baṇāsura’s arms, and how He killed the master of Pragjyotiṣapura and then rescued the young princesses held captive in that city” (12.12.39). To this we must add deaths of the King of Cedi, Pauṇḍraka, Salva, the foolish Dantavakra, Sambara, Dvivida, Pitha, Mura, Pancajana.

Kṛṣṇa not only executed many demons but further removed the burden of the earth by arranging for the great Battle of Kurukṣetra: “On the pretext of the Battle of Kurukṣetra, Lord Kṛṣṇa arranged for all the kings who were burdening the earth to assemble with their armies on opposite sides of the battlefield, and when the Lord killed them through the agency of war, the earth was relieved of its burden” (11.1.1).

Kṛṣṇa killed the greatest number of beings *indirectly* during the Battle of Kurukṣetra. Instead of wielding arms, he served as Arjuna’s charioteer: “He Himself was not a party in the fight. He simply created hostility between the powerful administrators, and they fought amongst themselves.

He was like the wind which causes friction between bamboos and so sparks a fire” (1.11.34). Kṛṣṇa did this *to reduce the earth’s burden*, at a time “when righteousness was in decline” (BG).<sup>122</sup>

Kṛṣṇa set up the two sides to fight, after he made modest efforts to make peace between them. After the war is successfully waged, he arranged for the destruction of His own dynasty on the pretext of the brāhmaṇas' curse. He tells his devotee that because

no outside force could ever bring about the defeat of this family, the Yadu dynasty, whose members have always been fully surrendered to Me and are unrestricted in their opulence. But if I inspire a quarrel within the dynasty, that quarrel will act just like a fire created from the friction of bamboo in a grove, and then I shall achieve My real purpose and return to My eternal abode.  
(11.1.4)

Kṛṣṇa’s prophesy which called for the end of the Yadu dynasty because of infighting comes true (11.7.3). Finally, Kṛṣṇa sacrifices his own body by using his mystic power to arrange for a hunter to mistake his foot for prey. In all of this, it appears that Kṛṣṇa is not hurt in the slightest.

We are told that Kṛṣṇa did the same in previous incarnations,. For example, “In His appearance as Hayagrīva He killed the demon Madhu and thus brought the Vedas back from the hellish planet Pātāla. .... As a boar, the Lord killed Hiranyakṣa, the son of Diti, while delivering the earth from the universal waters. ... In His incarnation as Narasiṃha, the Lord killed Hiranyakaśīpa, the king of demons, to free the saintly devotees from fear.” (11.4.18-19)

Viṣṇu’s incarnation as the warrior Parasurāma demonstrates warfare based on caste. Parasurāma annihilated the dynasty of Kārtavīrya (9.15.14) because “the royal dynasty, being excessively proud because of the material modes of passion and ignorance, became irreligious and ceased to care for the laws enacted by the brāhmaṇas.” (“Although their offense was not very severe, he killed them to lessen the burden of the world. (See 9.15.41). The Lord is said to “regularly takes advantage of the wars between the demons and demigods to kill the leaders of the demons” (11.4.20). As a result, in this case, he causes war and fighting indirectly.

Despite all this fighting, non-violence (ahiṃsa) is listed as a virtue to be practiced (3.28.4, 11.19.33-35), as a duty “of all members of society” (11.17.21), but particularly as the main duty for the sannyāsin (11.18.42).

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<sup>122</sup> Kṛṣṇa arranged this in previous cases also “Consequently, by the arrangement of God, such demons who possess great military strength fight with one another, and thus the great burden of demons on the surface of the earth is reduced. The demons increase their military power by the will of the Supreme, so that their numbers will be diminished and the devotees will have a chance to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness” (9.24.59). “O King, a fierce battle on the beach of the ocean of milk ensued between the demigods and the demons. The fighting was so terrible that simply hearing about it would make the hair on one's body stand on end.” (8.10.5)

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## 3.8.2 Extracts from the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam

### 3.8.2.1 Reasons not to fight or kill

1.7.13-14. the son of Dronacarya [**Asvatthama**] beheaded the five **sleeping** sons of Draupadi and delivered them as a prize to his master, foolishly thinking that he would be pleased. Duryodhana, however, disapproved of the **heinous act**, and he was not pleased in the least ... 1.7.35. Lord Sri Krishna said: O Arjuna, you should not show mercy by releasing this relative of a brahmana [brahma-bandhu, Asvatthama], for he has **killed innocent** boys in their sleep. 36. A person who knows the principles of religion **does not kill an enemy who is careless, intoxicated, insane, asleep, afraid or devoid of his chariot. Nor does he kill a boy, a woman, a foolish creature or a surrendered soul.** 37. A cruel and wretched person who maintains his existence at the cost of others' lives deserves to be killed for his own well-being, otherwise he will go down by his own actions. 38. Furthermore, I have personally heard you **promise** Draupadi that you would bring forth the head of the killer of her sons. 39. This man is an assassin and murderer of your own family members. Not only that, but he has also dissatisfied his master. He is but the burnt remnants of his family. [Krishna said:] **Kill him immediately.** 40. Suta Gosvami said: Although Krishna, who was examining Arjuna in religion, encouraged Arjuna to kill the son of Dronacarya, **Arjuna**, a great soul, **did not like the idea of killing him**, although Asvatthama was a heinous murderer of Arjuna's family members. .... 1.7.47. My lord, do not make the **wife of Dronacarya** [AWD: mother of Asvatthama] cry like me [Draupadi]. I am aggrieved for the death of my sons. She need not cry constantly like me. 48. If the kingly administrative order, being unrestricted in sense control, offends the brahmana order and enrages them, then the fire of that rage burns up the whole body of the royal family and brings grief upon all. 49. Suta Gosvami said: O brahmanas, King Yudhisthira fully supported the statements of the Queen, which were in accordance with the **principles of religion and were justified, glorious, full of mercy and equity, and without duplicity.** .... 1.7.53-54. The Personality of Godhead Sri Krishna said: A **friend of a brahmana is not to be killed**, but if he is an **aggressor he must be killed**. All these rulings are in the **scriptures**, and you should act accordingly. You have to fulfill your promise to your wife, and you must also act to the **satisfaction of Bhimasena and Me.** 55. Just then Arjuna could understand the motive of the Lord by His **equivocal orders**, and thus with his sword he severed both hair and jewel from the head of Asvatthama. 56. He [Asvatthama] had already lost his bodily luster due to infanticide, and now, moreover, having lost the jewel from his head, he lost even more strength. Thus he was unbound and **driven out of the camp.** 57. **Cutting the hair from his head, depriving him of his wealth and driving him from his residence are the prescribed punishments** for the relative of a brahmana. There is **no injunction for killing the body.**

1.8.47. King Yudhisthira, son of Dharma, overwhelmed by the death of his friends, was aggrieved just like a common, materialistic man. O sages, thus deluded by affection, he began to speak. 48. King Yudhisthira said: O my lot! I am the most sinful man! Just see my heart, which is full of ignorance! This body, which has ultimately **killed many boys, brahmanas, well-wishers, friends, parents, preceptors and brothers** meant for others, has killed many, many phalanxes of men. 49. I have. Though I live millions of years, I will not be relieved from the hell that awaits me for all these sins. 50. There is **no sin for a king who kills for the right cause**, who is engaged in **maintaining his citizens**. But this injunction is not applicable to me. 51. I have killed many friends of women, and I have thus **caused enmity** to such an extent that it is not possible to undo it by material welfare work. 52. As it is not possible to filter muddy water through mud, or purify a wine-stained pot with wine, it is not possible to counteract the killing of men by sacrificing animals.



1.8.48. The devotees of the Lord are so forbearing that even though they are defamed, cheated, cursed, disturbed, neglected or even killed, they are **never** inclined to **avenge** themselves.

2.7.26. When the world is **overburdened by the fighting** strength of kings who have no faith in God, the Lord, just to diminish the distress of the world, descends with His plenary portion.

4.11.6. When Svayambhuva Manu saw that his grandson Dhruva Maharaja was killing so many of the Yaksas who were not actually offenders, out of his great compassion he approached Dhruva with great sages to give him good instruction. 7. Lord Manu said: My dear son, please stop. It is not good to become unnecessarily angry--it is the path to hellish life. Now you are going beyond the limit by killing Yaksas who are actually not offenders. ... 9. My dear son, it has been proved that you are very much affectionate towards your brother and are greatly aggrieved at his being killed by the Yaksas, but just consider--for one Yaksa's offense, you have killed many others, who are **innocent**. 10. One should not accept the body as the self and thus, like the animals, kill the bodies of others. This is especially forbidden by **saintly** persons, who follow the path of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. 4.12.3. Actually, you have not killed the Yaksas, nor have they killed your brother, for the ultimate cause of generation and annihilation is the eternal time feature of the Supreme Lord.

4.26.6 ... One is not allowed to kill animals unnecessarily or without restrictions. The Vedas **regulate animal-killing** to stop the extravagance of foolish men influenced by the modes of passion and ignorance.

5.13.15. There were and are many political and social heroes who have conquered enemies of equal power, yet **due to their ignorance** in believing that the land is theirs, they fight one another and lay down their lives in battle. They are not able to take up the spiritual path accepted by those in the renounced order. Although they are big heroes and political leaders, they cannot take to the path of spiritual realization.

10.54.39. [Again addressing Krishna, Balarama said:] A **relative should not be killed** even if his wrongdoing warrants capital punishment. Rather, he should be thrown out of the family. Since he has **already been killed by his own sin, why kill him again?** 40. [Turning to Rukmini, Balarama continued:] The **code of sacred duty for warriors** established by Lord Brahma enjoins that one may have to kill even his own brother. That is indeed a most dreadful law.

10.72.31. "But I will not fight with You, Krishna, for You are a **coward**. Your strength abandoned You in the midst of battle, and You fled Your own capital of Mathura to take shelter in the sea. 32. "As for this one, Arjuna, he is **not as old** as I, nor is he very **strong**. Since he is no match for me, he should not be the contender. Bhima, however, is as strong as I am." 33. Having said this, Jarāsaṁdha offered Bhimasena a huge club, took up another himself and went outside the city. 34. The two heroes thus began battling each other on the level fighting grounds outside the city. Maddened with the fury of combat, they struck each other with their lightning-bolt-like clubs. 35. As they skillfully circled left and right, like actors dancing on a stage, the fight presented a **magnificent spectacle**. [Chapter Seventy-Two The Slaying of the Demon Jarāsaṁdha]

11.25.2-5. Material desire, great endeavor, audacity, dissatisfaction even in gain, false pride, praying for material advancement, considering oneself different and better than others, sense gratification, **rash eagerness to fight**, a fondness for hearing oneself praised, the tendency to ridicule others,

advertising one's own prowess and justifying one's actions by one's strength are qualities of the mode of passion.

12.3.7. "For the sake of conquering me, **materialistic persons fight** one another. Fathers oppose their sons, and brothers fight one another, because their hearts are bound to possessing political power."

12.3.25. In the Kali age people tend to be **greedy, ill-behaved and merciless**, and they fight one another **without good reason**. Unfortunate and obsessed with material desires, the people of Kali-yuga are almost all sudras and barbarians.

### 3.8.2.2 Punishments for inappropriate killing

1.12.32. Just at this time, King Yudhisthira was considering performing a horse sacrifice to get freed from **sins incurred from fighting with kinsmen**.

5.26.11. In this life, an envious person commits violent acts against many living entities. Therefore after his death, when he is taken to **hell** by Yamaraja, those living entities who were hurt by him appear as animals called rurus to inflict very severe pain upon him. Learned scholars call this hell Raurava. ... 12. Punishment in the hell called Mahaurava is compulsory for a person who maintains his own body by **hurting others**. In this hell, ruru animals known as kravyada torment him and eat his flesh. 13. For the maintenance of their bodies and the satisfaction of their tongues, cruel persons **cook poor animals and birds alive**. Such persons are condemned even by man-eaters. In their next lives they are carried by the Yamadutas to the hell known as Kumbhipaka, where they are cooked in boiling oil. 14. The killer of a brahmana is put into the hell known as Kalasutra, which has a circumference of eighty thousand miles and which is made entirely of copper. Heated from below by fire and from above by the scorching sun, the copper surface of this planet is extremely hot. Thus the **murderer of a brahmana** suffers from being burned both internally and externally. Internally he is burning with hunger and thirst, and externally he is burning from the scorching heat of the sun and the fire beneath the copper surface. Therefore he sometimes lies down, sometimes sits, sometimes stands up and sometimes runs here and there. He must suffer in this way for as many **thousands of years** as there are hairs on the body of an animal. [Chapter Twenty-six A Description of the Hellish Planets]

6.11.4. O demigods, these demoniac soldiers have taken birth uselessly. ... What is the benefit of killing such enemies **from behind** while they are running in fear? One who considers himself a hero should not kill an enemy who is afraid of losing his life. Such killing is never glorious, nor can it promote one to the **heavenly planets**. [Chapter Eleven The Transcendental Qualities of Vṛtrasura]

6.13.8-9. One who has **killed a brahmana**, one who has killed a cow or one who has killed his father, mother or spiritual master can be **immediately freed** from all sinful reactions simply by **chanting** the holy name of Lord Narayana. ... 15. Always thinking of how he could be relieved from the sinful reaction for killing a brahmana, King Indra, invisible to everyone, lived in the lake for one thousand years in the subtle fibers of the stem of a lotus. ... 17... Indra was ultimately relieved of all the reactions of his sinful deeds by strictly worshipping Lord Vishnu.

9.9.30. My lord, you are completely aware of the religious principles. As a son never deserves to be killed by his father, here is a brahmana who should be protected by the king, and never killed. How

does he deserve to be killed by a rajarsi like you? 31. You are well known and worshiped in learned circles. How dare you kill this brahmana, who is a saintly, sinless person, well versed in Vedic knowledge? Killing him would be like **destroying the embryo within the womb or killing a cow**.

10.1.10. Lord Krishna lived both in Vrndavana and in Mathura. What did He do there? Why did He **kill Kamsa**, His mother's brother? Such killing is **not** at all **sanctioned** in the **sastras**.

10.1.67. Kings **greedy** for sense gratification on this earth almost always kill their enemies indiscriminately. To satisfy their own whims, they may kill anyone, even their mothers, fathers, brothers or friends.

11.5.14. Those sinful persons who are ignorant of actual religious principles, yet consider themselves to be completely pious, without compunction commit violence against innocent animals who are fully trusting in them. In their **next lives**, such sinful persons will be **eaten** by the same creatures they have killed in this world.

### 3.8.2.3 Reasons to fight and kill

1.17.10-11. O chaste one, the king's good name, duration of life and good rebirth vanish when all kinds of living beings are terrified by miscreants in his kingdom. It is certainly the prime duty of the king to **subdue first the sufferings of those who suffer**. Therefore I must kill this most wretched man [AWD: Kali] because he is violent against other living beings. ... 31. The King thus said: We have inherited the fame of Arjuna; therefore since you have **surrendered** yourself with folded hands you need not fear for your life. But you cannot remain in my kingdom, for you are the friend of irreligion.

3.18.25. Brahma continued: My dear Lord, You are infallible. Please **kill this sinful demon** before the demoniac hour arrives and he presents another formidable approach favorable to him. You can kill him by Your internal potency without doubt. 26. My Lord, the darkest evening, which covers the world, is fast approaching. Since You are the Soul of all souls, kindly kill him and win victory for the demigods.

4.17.26. Any cruel person--be he a man, woman or impotent eunuch--who is only interested in his personal maintenance and has **no compassion** for other living entities **may be killed** by the king. Such killing can never be considered actual killing. [King Prthu's reply to the earthly Planet in form of a cow]

7.9.14. Since even saintly persons take **pleasure in the killing of a scorpion or a snake**, all the worlds have achieved great satisfaction because of the death of this demon.

9.14.7. King **Indra**, accompanied by all kinds of demigods, joined the side of Brhaspati. Thus there was a **great fight**, destroying both demons and demigods, only for the sake of Tara, Brhaspati's wife. [Chapter Fourteen, "King Pururava Enchanted by Urvasi"]

10.79.25. Lord Balarama found Duryodhana and Bhima with clubs in their hands, each furiously striving for victory over the other as they circled about skillfully. The Lord addressed them as follows. 26. [Lord Balarama said:] King Duryodhana! And Bhima! Listen! You two warriors are equal in fighting prowess. I know that one of you has greater physical power, while the other is better

trained in technique. 27. Since you are so evenly **matched** in fighting prowess, I do not see how either of you can win or lose this duel. Therefore please **stop** this useless battle. 28. [Sukadeva Gosvami continued:] They did not accept Lord Balarama's request, O King, although it was logical, for their **mutual enmity** was irrevocable. Each of them constantly remembered the **insults and injuries** he had suffered from the other.

10.86.10. Standing on his chariot, Arjuna took up his bow and drove off the valiant fighters and palace guards who tried to block his way. As her relatives shouted in anger, he **took Subhadra away** just as a lion takes his prey from the midst of lesser animals.

11.16.7. On the Battlefield of Kuruksetra Arjuna thought that **killing his relatives** would be an abominable, irreligious activity, motivated only by his desire to acquire a kingdom. He therefore desisted from the battle, thinking, "I would be the killer of my relatives. They would be destroyed." Thus Arjuna was afflicted with mundane consciousness. 8. At that time I enlightened Arjuna, the tiger among men, with **logical arguments**, and thus in the front of the battle Arjuna addressed Me with questions in the same way that you are now inquiring. 9. My dear Uddhava, I am the Supersoul of all living entities, and therefore I am naturally their well-wisher and supreme controller. Being the creator, maintainer and annihilator of all entities, I am not different from them.

### 3.8.2.4 Krishna fights and kills directly

3.2.30. The great wizards who were able to assume any form were engaged by the King of Bhoja, Kamsa, to kill Krsna, but in the course of His pastimes the **Lord killed** them as easily as a child breaks dolls.

10.37.2. Kesi was searching for Krsna to **fight**, so when the Lord stood before him and challenged him to approach, the horse [demon] responded by roaring like a lion.

10.54.19-20. Frustrated and enraged, mighty-armed Rukmi, dressed in armor and wielding his bow, had sworn before all the kings, "I shall not again enter Kundina if I do not kill Krsna in battle and bring Rukmini back with me. I swear this to you." [Chapter Fifty-Four, "The Marriage of Krsna and Rukmini"]

Krishna kills Kamsa [10.24. Chapter Forty-Four, "The Killing of Kamsa"]

12.12.28-29. Also glorified are the innumerable pastimes of Sri Krsna, the enemy of the demons, including His childhood pastimes of sucking out **Putana's** life air along with her breast-milk, breaking the **cart**, trampling down **Tnnavarta**, killing **Bakasura**, **Vatsasura** and **Aghasura**, and the pastimes He enacted when Lord Brahma hid His calves and cowherd boyfriends in a cave. 30. The Srimad-Bhagavatam tells how Lord Krsna and Lord Balarama killed the demon **Dhenukasura** and his companions, how Lord Balarama destroyed Pralambasura, ... 31-33. ...the killing of the foolish demons **Sankhacuda**, **Arista** and **Kesi**-all these pastimes are elaborately recounted. ... 35. Also narrated are how Krsna and Balarama killed the elephant **Kuvalayapida**, the wrestlers **Mustika** and **Canura**, and **Kamsa** and other demons, ... 37. Also described are the **annihilation of each of the many armies brought by Jarasandha**, the killing of the barbarian king **Kalayavana** ... 39. Also narrated are how Lord Krsna, in the battle with Banasura, defeated Lord Siva by making him yawn, how the Lord cut off Banasura's arms, and how He killed the **master of Pragiyotisapura** and then rescued the young princesses held captive in that city. 40-41. There are descriptions of the powers and the deaths of the King of **Cedi**, **Paundraka**, **Salva**, the foolish **Dantavakra**, **Sambara**, **Dvidida**,

**Pitha, Mura, Pancajana** .... The Bhagavatam also recounts how Lord Kṛṣṇa relieved the earth's burden by engaging the Pandavas in the Battle of **Kuruksetra**. 42-43. How the Lord withdrew His **own dynasty** on the pretext of the brahmanas' curse; Vasudeva's conversation with Narada; ... and then how Lord Kṛṣṇa gave up this mortal world by His own mystic power-the Bhagavatam narrates all these events.

3.3.4. By subduing seven bulls whose noses were not pierced, the Lord achieved the hand of Princess Nagnijiti in the open competition to select her bridegroom. Although the Lord was victorious, His competitors asked the hand of the princess, and thus there was a fight. Well equipped with weapons, **the Lord killed** or wounded all of them, but He was not hurt Himself.

9.15.14. Learned scholars accept this Parasurama as the celebrated incarnation of Vasudeva who annihilated the dynasty of Kartavirya. **Parasurama killed all the ksatriyas on earth twenty-one times**. 15. When the royal dynasty, being excessively proud because of the material modes of passion and ignorance, became irreligious and ceased to care for the laws enacted by the brahmanas, Parasurama killed them. Although their offense was not very severe, he killed them to lessen the burden of the world. [Chapter Fifteen Parasurama, the Lord's Warrior Incarnation] ... 41. 41. My dear son, killing a king who is an **emperor** is more severely sinful than killing a brahmana. But now, if you become Kṛṣṇa conscious and worship the holy places, you can atone for this great sin.

11.4.17. The infallible Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vishnu, has descended into this world .... In His appearance as Hayagriva He **killed the demon Madhu** and thus brought the Vedas back from the hellish planet Patalaloka. 18. .... As a boar, the Lord killed **Hiranyaksa**, the son of Diti, while delivering the earth from the universal waters. ... 19. ... In His incarnation as Nṛsimha, the Lord killed **Hiranyakasipu**, the king of demons, to free the saintly devotees from fear. 20. The Supreme Lord regularly **takes advantage of the wars between the demons and demigods to kill the leaders of the demons**. The Lord thus encourages the demigods by protecting the universe through His various incarnations during the reigns of each Manu. ...

21. Lord Parasurama appeared in the family of Bhṛgu as a fire that **burned to ashes the dynasty of Haihaya**. Thus Lord Parasurama rid the earth of all **ksatriyas** twenty-one times. The same Lord appeared as Ramacandra, the husband of Sitadevi, and thus He killed the ten-headed **Ravana**, along with all the soldiers of Lanka. .... 22. To diminish the burden of the earth, the unborn Lord will take birth in the Yadu dynasty and perform feats impossible even for the demigods. Propounding speculative philosophy, the Lord, as **Buddha**, will bewilder the unworthy performers of Vedic sacrifices. And as **Kalki** the Lord will **kill** all the low-class men posing as rulers at the end of the age of Kali.

### 3.8.2.5 Krishna causes war and fighting (indirectly)

1.9.12. Bhisma-deva said: Oh, what terrible sufferings and what terrible injustices you good souls suffer for being the sons of religion personified. You did not deserve to remain alive under those tribulations, yet you were protected by the brahmanas, God and religion. ... 1.9.17. 17. O best among the descendants of Bharata [Yudhisthira], I maintain, therefore, that all this is within the **plan of the Lord**. **Accepting** the inconceivable plan of the Lord, you must follow it. You are now the appointed administrative head, and, my lord, you should now take care of those subjects who are now rendered helpless. ... 1.9.35. In obedience to the command of His friend, Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa entered the arena of the Battlefield of Kuruksetra between the soldiers of Arjuna and Duryodhana, and while there He **shortened the life spans** of the opposite party by His **merciful** glance.

This was done simply by His looking at the enemy. Let my mind be fixed upon that Kṛṣṇa.

1.11.34. The Lord was pacified after killing those kings who were burdensome to the earth. They were puffed up with their military strength, their horses, elephants, chariots, infantry, etc. He Himself was not a party in the fight. He simply **created hostility** between the powerful administrators, and they fought amongst themselves. He was like the wind which causes friction between bamboos and so sparks a fire.

1.15.25-26. O King, as in the ocean the **bigger and stronger aquatics swallow up the smaller and weaker** ones, so also the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to **lighten the burden of the earth**, has engaged the stronger Yadu to kill the weaker, and the bigger Yadu to kill the smaller.

6.12.17. O my enemy, consider this **battle a gambling match** in which our lives are the stakes, the arrows are the dice, and the animals acting as carriers are the game board. No one can understand who will be defeated and who will be victorious. It all depends on providence. [Vrtrasura, King Indra]

8.10.5. O King, a fierce **battle** on the beach of the ocean of milk ensued between the demigods and the demons. The fighting was so terrible that simply hearing about it would make the hair on one's body stand on end. [Chapter Ten The Battle Between the Demigods and the Demons]

9.24.59. Consequently, by the arrangement of God, such demons, who possess great military strength, fight with one another, and thus the great burden of demons on the surface of the earth is reduced. The demons increase their military power by the will of the Supreme, so that their numbers will be diminished and the devotees will have a chance to advance in Krsna consciousness. [Chapter Twenty-four, "Krsna the Supreme Personality of Godhead"]

11.1.1. Sri Sukadeva Gosvami said: Lord Sri Krsna, accompanied by Balarama and surrounded by the Yadu dynasty, executed the killing of many demons. Then, further to remove the burden of the earth, the Lord arranged for the great Battle of Kuruksetra, which suddenly erupted in violence between the Kurus and the Pandavas. 2. Because the sons of Pandu were enraged by the numerous offenses of their enemies, such as duplicitous gambling, verbal insults, the seizing of Draupadi's hair, and many other cruel transgressions, the Supreme Lord engaged those Pandavas as the immediate cause to execute His will. On the pretext of the Battle of Kuruksetra, Lord Krsna arranged for all the kings who were burdening the earth to assemble with their armies on opposite sides of the battlefield, and when the Lord killed them through the agency of war, the earth was relieved of its burden. 3. The Supreme Personality of Godhead used the Yadu dynasty, which was protected by His own arms, to eliminate the kings who with their armies had been the burden of this earth. Then the unfathomable Lord thought to Himself, "Although some may say that the earth's burden is now gone, in My opinion it is not yet gone, because there still remains the Yadava dynasty itself, whose strength is unbearable for the earth." 4. Lord Krsna thought, "No outside force could ever bring about the defeat of this family, the Yadu dynasty, whose members have always been fully surrendered to Me and are unrestricted in their opulence. But if I inspire a quarrel within the dynasty, that quarrel will act just like a fire created from the friction of bamboo in a grove, and then I shall achieve My real purpose and return to My eternal abode."

11.7. 3. Now due to the brahmanas' **curse** the Yadu dynasty will certainly perish by fighting among themselves.

### 3.8.2.6 Non-violence (Ahimsa)

(source: vedabase.net/a/ahimsa, quotes from [Śrīmad Bhāgavatam](#))

1.18.22. **Self-controlled** persons who are attached to the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa can all of a sudden give up the world of material attachment, including the gross body and subtle mind, and go away to attain the highest perfection of the renounced order of life, by which **nonviolence** and renunciation are consequential.

3.28.4. One should practice **nonviolence** and truthfulness, should avoid thieving and be satisfied with possessing as much as he needs for his maintenance. ...

11.17.21. **Nonviolence**, truthfulness, honesty, desire for the happiness and welfare of all others and freedom from lust, anger and greed constitute duties for all members of society.

11.18.42. The main religious duties of a **sannyāsī** are equanimity and **nonviolence**, whereas for the **vānaprastha** austerity and philosophical understanding of the difference between the body and soul are prominent. ...

11.19.33-35. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: **Nonviolence**, truthfulness, not coveting or stealing the property of others, ... fearlessness are the twelve primary **disciplinary** principles.

Summary: Non-violence (ahimsa) is frequently listed as something to be practiced (3.28.4, 11.19.33-35). This is a duty “of all members of society” (11.17.21), but particularly for the sannyāsī (11.18.42).

### 3.8.2.7 Other passages

6.13.22-23. In this very great narrative there is glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Narayana, there are statements about the exaltedness of devotional service, there are descriptions of devotees like Indra and Vṛtrasura, and there are statements about King Indra's release from sinful life and about his **victory in fighting the demons**. By understanding this incident, one is relieved of all sinful reactions.

## References

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Srimad-Bhagavatam: Bhagavata Purana* (18 vol.), Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Los Angeles, 1972-77.

## 3.9 The Upaniṣads

No passages were found in the Upaniṣads dealing with combat or armed force. A survey was made of the 12 Major Upaniṣads<sup>123</sup>, which are attached to the four Vedas (Rigveda or RV,

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<sup>123</sup> Traditionally, there are 108 Upanishads altogether, the remainder of which are considered minor, and of greater or lesser significance from sect to sect. They are as follows: 23 Samanayayurvedanta Upanishads;

Yajurveda or YV, Samaveda or SV, Atharvaveda or AV): *Aitareya Upanishad* (RV), *Kaushitaki Upanishad* (RV), *Chandogya Upanishad* (SV), *Kena Upanishad* (SV), *Taittiriya Upanishad* (YV), *Katha Upanishad* (YV), *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (YV), *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* (YV), *Isha Upanishad* (YV), *Prashna Upanishad* (AV), *Mundaka Upanishad* (AV), *Mandukya Upanishad* (AV).

The Max Muller translation of the Upanishads ([sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe01](http://sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe01)) was searched using Google with the terms: fight (0 hits), “kṣatriya” (6), “sword” (0) and “war” (0).

Although the *Upaniṣads* examined differ in structure, style, length, etc., they provide little material dealing with the use of force. The Upanishads are concerned primarily with cosmology and metaphysics. The teachings therein are generally characterized as abstract, cryptic, mystical, esoteric, etc. The overall tone of these texts seems to be distinctively incompatible with the current research in that they speak neither to, nor about, members of society. Rather they address spiritual aspiration, particularly for those who seek to renounce society. They are void of commentary pertaining to the use of force for any end, political or otherwise. Nowhere is war, violence, or the use of force mentioned. While the *kṣatriya* (warrior caste) is mentioned a half dozen times, these *upaniṣads* do not deal with the tasks or roles of such persons. The only mention of actual physical killing occurs in the *Chhandogya Upanishad*. Verse 9 of the 10<sup>th</sup> Chapter (“The Various Paths followed after Death”) reads as follows: “a man who steals the gold of a Brahmin, he who drinks liquor, he who dishonours his teacher’s bed and he who kills a Brahmin—these four fall, as also a fifth who associates with them.”

The contents of these *Upaniṣads* range from invocations of Gods and religious rites to myths and to student-teacher dialogues (often in question-answer format). Overall they comment upon the nature of the Absolute (i.e., Brahman, the Self, real knowledge, etc), and one’s pursuit thereof. The aim here is individual self-realization, irrespective of, and isolated from, society’s ebb and flow. They are not concerned with practical issues of social life.

“Sacrifice” is mentioned a great deal, particularly in the context of ritual. When one is asked to sacrifice oneself, the texts refer to one’s mundane, social self, the self which ought to be transcended for spiritual growth. The teachings of the *Upaniṣads* appear antithetical to any type of conflict (armed or otherwise) altogether, whether of interpersonal and intrapersonal variety. The goal described and advocated is one beyond anger, combat, enmity, multiplicity etc., indeed beyond life and death itself.

### 3.9.1 Bibliography

Max Müller (translator), *The Upanishads*, in *Sacred Books of the East*, Volume 1 [1879], accessed at [www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe01](http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe01) and [www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe02](http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe02). This book contains the following Upanishads: Khândogya, Talavakâra or Kena-Upanishad, Aitareya-Âranyaka, Kaushîtaki, Vâgasaneyi-Samhitâ-Upanishad or Îsâvâsya or Îsâ-Upanishad.

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20 Yoga Upanishads; 17 Samnyasa Upanishads; 14 Vaishnava Upanishads; 14 Shaiva Upanishads; 8 Shakta Upanishads.



## 3.10 The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali

*Yoga* (meaning union, especially divine, spiritual union) is one of the six classical schools of Indian philosophy. Yogic Practices are thought to have originated as far back as the Indus Valley Civilization, between 3300 and 1700 B.C.E. The yoga sūtras are among its first known treatises, dated circa 150 B.C.E., attributed to the legendary sage Patañjali. It consists of groups of highly terse aphorisms intended to be elucidated by a spiritual master. The concise statements are directed towards spiritual aspirants, offering esoteric instruction on the path of liberation from karma and rebirth. The aphorisms are divided into four sections: *Samādhi Pāda*, “On Concentration,” *Sādhana Pāda*, “On Practice,” *Vibhūti Pāda*, “On Supernatural Attainment” and *Kaivalya Pāda*, “On Liberation.” It is noteworthy that this school of thought construes *yoga* as an eightfold path beginning with the *yamas* (ethical conduct). Although, much like the Upanishadic literature, this work is geared towards spiritual aspirants on the margins of social life, it speaks to values which Indian culture, ancient and modern, espouses. The first of the five ethical requirements in order to engage in yoga is *ahiṃsā*, non-violence.

The translation used was by Bon Giovanni, available at [www.sacred-texts.com/hin/yogasutr.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/yogasutr.htm) (accessed: 27 June 2008). This was cross-referenced with the book, “Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali”, Commentary by Swāmi Hariharānanda Āraṇya, Translated into English by P.N. Mukerji, State University of New York Press: New York, 1983. The text was visually scanned without the use of electronic word searches.

### 3.10.1 Extracts from the Yoga Sūtra’s of Patañjali

#### 3.10.1.1 Direct relevance

2.29. The eight limbs of Union are **self-restraint** in actions, fixed observance, posture, regulation of energy, mind-control in sense engagements, concentration, meditation, and realization.

2.30. Self-restraint in actions includes **abstention from violence**, from falsehoods, from stealing, from sexual engagements, and from acceptance of gifts.

2.33. When improper thoughts disturb the mind, there should be constant pondering over the opposites.

2.34. Improper thoughts and emotions such as those of **violence- whether done, caused to be done, or even approved of** – indeed, any thought originating in desire, anger or delusion, whether mild medium or intense- do all **result** in endless pain and misery. Overcome such distractions by pondering on the opposites.

2.35. When one is confirmed in **non-violence, hostility ceases** in his presence.

#### 3.10.1.2 Secondary relevance

1.41. When the **agitations** of the mind are under control, the mind becomes like a transparent crystal and has the power of becoming whatever form is presented. knower, act of knowing, or what is known.

1.42. The argumentative<sup>124</sup> condition is the confused mixing of the word, its right meaning, and knowledge.

1.43. When the memory is purified and the mind shines forth as the object alone, it is called non-argumentative<sup>125</sup>.

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<sup>124</sup> Savitarkā in the Sanskrit; there is ambiguity about the precise connotation of this world.

### 3.11 Contradictory attitudes towards violence in Hinduism: to engage or renounce the world? (with reference to Pravṛtti Dharma and Nivṛtti Dharma in the Mahābhārata)

#### 3.11.1 Background

Vedic culture arose in an area of India known as the āryan *madhyadeśa* (the “heartland”), or *āryavarta* (the land of the āryans), where Indo-Aryan religion was practiced by orthodox Brahmans. This religion consisted primarily of ritual sacrifice. From the Mauryan period (321 B.C.E.) onwards, change swept the economic landscape: “urbanism, mobility, trade, commerce, agriculture, the formation of guilds and artisans” placed more wealth and power in the lower castes. There were also political pressures. King Mahāpadmānanda of the sūdra caste succeeded in ruling the entire *madhyadeśa* c. 364 B.C.E. This placed great stress upon the Brahmanical traditions of class structure. Furthermore, *śramana* movements – both orthodox (Brahmanical) and heterodox (such as Buddhist, Jain) in nature – evolved at the eastern edges of the *āryavarta*, advancing yogic and ascetic ideals. The moral idealism of these movements produces a soteriological reformulation which greatly challenged the worldly ideals of Vedic religion.

The *Mahābhārata* (literally “Great India”) responds to these tensions by harkening back to Vedic Brahmanical culture, while simultaneously assimilating *śramanic* ideals. The epic, composed between roughly 600 B.C.E. and 400 C.E., betrays a “conspicuous attempt on the part of bhrāhmanas to synthesize diverse religious systems” (Dhand 24).

The *mokṣadharma* section of the Śāntiparva (12<sup>th</sup> and largest volume of the *Mahābhārata*) declares that religious activities are of two essential types: *pravṛtti dharma* (duties of “active life”) and *nivṛtti dharma* (duties of “retired life”), called the “two paths upon which the Vedas are established” (XII.233.6). This twofold division into worldly and ascetic exists, too, in *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, and the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (27). This distinction essentially accounts for plurality of religious practice, while giving them all relative value. These two broad codes attract different followers, support different goals, practice different ethics and utilize different methods to achieve their respective goals.

#### 3.11.2 Pravṛtti Dharma

The term *pravṛtti* connotes an active interest in worldly affairs. According to the *Bhāgavad Gītā*, this is the religion of the Vedas (BG II.43-45). This is the religion of the masses, of people oriented towards worldly pursuits, pragmatically immersed in social, familial life. It is a domestic entity. The *Dharmaśāstras* correspond to this category of religion. This dharma governs social obligations and is the ideological thrust behind *varṇāśrama dharma* and duties prescribed by age (stage of life), caste and gender. However, there is a “universal” application of this ethical mode. For example, Śāntipārva XII:60.7-8 lists the following qualities as universal values: “**freedom from anger**, truthfulness of speech, an agreeable nature, **forgiveness**, fathering children upon one’s own wives, purity, **avoidance of quarrel**, sincerity, and maintenance of dependents”

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<sup>125</sup> Nirvitarkā in the Sanskrit; same issue as footnote 1.

(Dhand 30). However, clearly, these characteristics depend on one's station in life (caste). *Pravṛtti* ethics are largely social ethics, addressed, primarily to twice-born (meaning Kshatriya and Brahman) male householders. The personal religious goals here are relatively modest: one implements this scheme in order to continue the trajectory of one's earthly karmic existence. One follows these goals until one is reborn ready for the true religious path, the *uttamadharma*, the ideal religion, which is geared towards permanence and release of rebirth: *nivṛtti dharma*. The fruits of *pravṛtti dharma* are temporary, thus the dharma itself is referred to as rebirth-oriented (*pravṛtṭiḥ punarāvṛtṭiḥ* XII.210.4).

### 3.11.3 Nivṛtti Dharma

As opposed to its *pravṛtti* counterpart, *nivṛtti dharma* is geared towards the personal spiritual emancipation of the individual soul from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth (*saṃsāra*). Thus, this path entails an outright rejection of worldly goals and activities. *Saṃsāra* is seen as a locus of ignorant beguilement and perpetual suffering. *Nivṛtti dharma* is therefore not the religions of ordinary people, but that of the extraordinary, exceptional, tenacious few who are willing and able to commit to an existence of arduous self-denial, steering clear of the enjoyment of life in sole pursuit of the soteriological ideal of *mokṣa*, a permanent, blissful release from rebirth.

The practitioner of *nivṛtti dharma* renounces all bodily and mental comforts, operating beyond social dictates. The practitioner aims to generate *tapas*, spiritual “heat” which scorches the seeds of worldly attachment. The person progresses through acts of rigorous asceticism. This path is associated with immense compassion and empathy for the suffering of all beings (XII.231.21; XII.321.23; XII.286.28; BG.IV.35). *Nivṛtti dharma* is “that which strives for the benefit of all creatures; dharma is so called because it is wedded to **ahiṃsā**” (XII.110.10). Adherents to this *ahiṃsa* (non-violent) dharma are generally characterized by **peacefulness**, tranquility, patience and equanimity. Such a person **does no harm** and is the refuge of all beings (XII.237.20). This is the ideal human. The *Mahābhārata* states that “*nivṛtti dharma* [leads to] the unmanifest eternal Brahman [while] *pravṛtti* [leads to] rebirth. *Nivṛtti* leads to the highest end” (XII.210.3-4). *Nivṛtti* is essentially suited for the renouncer, whose ethics are listed in numerous places throughout the text as: “*ahiṃsā, satya, asteya, brahmacarya, dama, kṣamā, aparigraha*: **noninjuriousness**, truthfulness, nonstealing, celibacy, self-restraint, forgiveness, non-grasping” (Dhand 44).

### 3.11.4 Fighting peacefully? Reconciling violence between traditions

The tension between these world-denying and world-affirming strands of Hinduism is tentatively reconciled in the convention of *āśrama*-s, stages of life, where one may pursue *pravṛtti* ideals for the majority of his life, and must abandon them, and embark upon a life of asceticism for the final stage of his human life, the *saṃnyāsa* stage around the age of 75. Violence (and abstinence there from) plays a crucial role to each dharma. *Ahiṃsā* is profusely praised throughout. The sage Kapila, founder of the Sāṃkhya system, states that no law is higher than *ahiṃsā* (XII.260.17). However the text is clear that *hiṃsā* (harm) is a necessary aspect of human existence, even with a herbivorous existence since “there are many creatures in water, in soil, and in fruit” (XII.15.25); and indeed, “there are many creatures that are so minute that their existence can only be inferred. With the falling of the eyelids alone, they are destroyed” (XII,15.26).

Although violence is necessary for existence, it is condoned only under certain conditions, including: for righteous warfare (*dharmayuddha*), disciplining criminals, maintenance of social order, protection of the weak from the strong, acquisition of food (agriculture or hunting) and, according to some, for ritual sacrifice (Dhand 47). Sanctioned violence is highly regulated and organized. For example, only *grhasthin* (householding) *brāhmanas* may engage in ritual violence, only *grhasthin vaiśya*'s may engage in agricultural violence, and only *grhasthin kṣatriyas* may engage in war, disciplinary action and so on. Further, these acts may only occur in sanctioned space, such as battlefields, courts and forests. Although violence is sanctioned for a *dharmayuddha*, one must first exhaust all efforts, ensuring that violence is a last resort, as in the Western Just War tradition. For example, in the *Udyogaparva* section of the *Mahābhārata*. Kṛṣṇa attempts conciliation (lowering the Pāṇḍavas demands attempting to compromise using pacifying language, *sāma*), dissension (attempting to create division in the Karava camp, *bheda*), bribery (*dāna*), until finally he resorted to *daṇḍa*, punishment. Once violence becomes inevitable (for the preservation of righteousness), one may proceed, but with a serene mind, not motivated by hatred, anger, wrath, revenge, personal gain or desire to harm. Thus, even in this *pravṛtti* pursuit – as in violent warfare – the *nivṛtti* mentality of peacefulness must be maintained in order for the violence to be fully sanctioned. This is the novel reconciliation of these dharmas offered by the Bhagavad Gītā.

### 3.11.5 Reference

Dhand, Arti, “Religion in the Mahābhārata”, Chapter I in *Woman as Fire, Woman as Sage*, State University of New York Press: New York, 2008.

## 4 Jainism<sup>126</sup>

Jainism, like Buddhism, originated in India and is sometimes considered an offshoot of Hinduism. Gautama Buddha and Mahavir (the most prominent of Jain enlightened teachers called Tirthankaras), were contemporaries in the sixth century B.C.E. But unlike Buddhism, Jainism did not significantly spread beyond Indian soil. Still the religion has had a significant impact, even surviving through centuries of brutal wars in the Indian subcontinent, despite its pacifism (or perhaps because of it). There are today a number of Jain branches (including Svetambara, Sthanakavasis and Digambara) and sects who cherish a large number of scriptures. Most Jain scriptures are relevant to the subject of this report because Jainism is a religion based on the renunciation of force. Yet, due to the great deal of repetition in the Jain passages dealing with violence (himsa) and non-violence (ahimsa), only three important and widely respected Jain sacred texts are covered here. Table 4.1 gives an overview.

*Table 4.1: Overview of three major Jain sacred texts*

	<b>Mahavratas</b>	<b>Tattvartha Sutra</b>	<b>Purushartasiddhapaya</b>
<b>Authorship</b>	These five great (maha) vows (vratas) taken by practicing Jain monks do not derive from a specific, single written work.	Written by Acarya Umasvati in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> century BCE. It is accepted by all sects of Jainism.	Written by Acarya Amrit Chandra Suri in the 10 <sup>th</sup> century.
<b>Focus</b>	The Mahavratas focus on living a proper moral life. A monk is to refrain from engaging in violence, tell the truth when it doesn't result in harm, refrain from stealing, refrain from sexual activity and refrain from attachment.	The Tattvartha Sutra is a comprehensive text on all aspects of Jain philosophy. The seventh chapter deals with ethics based around <i>Ahimsa</i> (non-violence).	<i>Ahimsa</i> is the primary focus of the text. It examines in detail all those actions which cause harm to other beings.

<sup>126</sup> By A. Walter Dorn, Raoul Bedi and Stephen Gucciardi, unless otherwise indicated.

<b>Role of Violence</b>	Violence directly violates the vow of <i>Ahimsa</i> . Violence includes mental and emotional energies as well as physical actions. Due to the fact that it is nearly impossible to refrain from killing anything, intention is viewed as being much more important than physical acts themselves.	Any intention to harm living beings attracts <i>karma</i> , thereby ensuring that the recipient will continue to remain bound to this earthly existence. Salvation is impossible as long as one continues to harbour violent thoughts.	All forms of violence are reprehensible. All lead to <i>karma</i> and attachment to this world. Even eating carrion or honey is negative due to the existence of small creatures within these substances.
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## 4.1 Purushartha Siddhyapaya: Violence (Himsa) and Non-violence (Ahimsa)

The Purushartha Siddhyapaya is a Digambar Jain treatise of high authority. It focuses on *Ahimsa* (non-violence), the root principle of Jainism, as a basic rule of conduct, in varying aspects. *Himsa* (violence) is defined as injury to the “vitalities” through lack of attention, care or caution. Other principles expounded upon include right belief, knowledge, conduct and renunciation.

The text used for extracting was: *Purushartha–Siddhyapaya* by Acharya Amrit Chandra Suri, also known as “Jaina Pravachana Rahasya-kosh.” It is the most famous translation and provides commentary by Ajit Prasada from 1933. This translation was accessed at [www.jainworld.com/scriptures/purusharthasiddhyapaya.asp](http://www.jainworld.com/scriptures/purusharthasiddhyapaya.asp).

The text was scanned using the following search terms: *Ahimsa*, *Himsa*, non-injury, passion, killing, destruction, crushing, painful, beating, quarrel, cutting, piercing, hunting, battle, mutilating, germs, organisms.

The passages are ordered sequentially. Over half of the 226 verses in the scripture deal with *himsa* or *ahimsa*. The verses are referenced by their number order in the scripture.

### 4.1.1 Summary<sup>127</sup>

This scripture repeatedly emphasizes the necessity of non-injury (*ahimsa*) in mind, body and speech (42-43). Violence (*himsa*) must be avoided because it injures the soul (*jiva*) (42). Also it brings (negative) karmic results to the doer, though to some the results are more serious than others (52).

The Jain vow of *Ahimsa* entails many prohibitions, including not:

- mutilating, beating or tying up (183);

<sup>127</sup> By A. Walter Dorn.

- killing in mercy since that is a “misconception” (85);
- giving [to others] instruments of *himsa*, such as knife, poison, fire, plough, sword and so on (144);
- eating flesh or using flesh, even if the animal has died of itself (65-66) because cooking, eating or using flesh kills “spontaneously-born creatures” in the meat (68);
- using honey, which “very often represents the death of bees.” One who does so is “a great destroyer” (69);
- drinking wine (61) since it “stupefies the mind causing one to forget piety and then commit Himsa without hesitation” (62). Wine is also said to be the birth-place of many creatures (63);
- eating at night in order to avoid eating minute insects by accident (129, 133);
- eating articles “too well cooked and aphrodisiacal food” (193);
- digging grounds, uprooting trees, trampling lawns and so forth, unless it is necessary (143).

There is a small place for human error and misdeed in this rather stringent and absolutist text. Some transgressions may occur and so the scripture distinguishes total from limited abstinence from injuring (40). Persons should avoid *himsa* “to the best of their capacity” (60). Those who are unable to adopt complete *ahimsa*, including committing no violence to immobile beings, should “at least give up the Himsa of mobile beings” (75). Householders may have to injure a limited number of “one-sensed beings” but they should desist from causing the destruction of other immobile beings (77).

The text confronts the issue of self-defence only indirectly. Apparently beating and abuse should be endured “without any feeling of vexation, by one who desires to get rid of all cause for pain” (206-208). One cannot kill in order to save others from being killed. “Beings which kill others should not be killed in the belief that the destruction of one of them leads to the protection of many others” (83). The wrongdoers who kill many, accumulate their own “grave sin” (84).

Even harbouring an intention or thought of violence makes one culpable (54). “One should never think of hunting, victory, defeat, battle ... because they only lead to sin” (141). Furthermore, speech which makes another person engage in “piercing, cutting, beating” is sinful (97).

Violence is declared a form of “theft” (104) presumably because injury hurts what belongs to others. But when “passionless saints” take in Karmic molecules there is no sin (105).

#### 4.1.2 Extracts from the Purushartha Siddhyapaya

29. One should ever cherish feelings of deep affection for religion, which brings about the treasure of spiritual happiness, and for the principle of **non-injury**, and also for coreligionists.

...

39. Thus, by restraint of all censurable movements, is attained such clear and **unattached** conduct, as is **above all passion**. This the very nature of the self.

40. As distinguished by **total or limited abstinence** from injuring, falsehood, theft, unchastity, and worldly attachment, Conduct is of two kinds.

... 42. All this indulgence is “**Himsa**” because it **injures** the real nature of **Jiva**. Falsehood, etc., are only given by way of illustration, for the instruction of the disciple.

43. **Any injury** whatsoever to the material or conscious vitalities caused through passionate activity of mind, body or speech is **Himsa**, assuredly.
44. Assuredly, the non appearance of **attachment and other (passions)** is Ahimsa, and their appearance is Himsa. This is a summary of the Jaina Scripture.
45. There never is Himsa when vitalities are injured, if a person is not moved by any kind of **passions** and is carefully following **Right Conduct**.
46. And, if one acts carelessly, moved by the influence of **passions**, there certainly advances Himsa in front of him whether a living being is killed or not.
47. Because under the influence of passion, the person **first injures the self**, through the self; whether there is subsequently an injury caused to another being or not.
48. The **want** of abstinence from **Himsa**, and indulgence in Himsa, both constitute **Himsa**; and thus whenever there is **careless activity of mind, body, or speech**, there always is injury to vitalities.
- ... 52. To one, trifling Himsa brings in time serious **result**; to another grievous Himsa at time of fruition causes small consequence.
53. Even when jointly committed by two persons the same Himsa at the time of fruition, curiously enough, causes severe **retribution** to one, and a mild one to another.
54. Because of **intention**, Himsa is culpable sometimes before it is committed, sometimes at the time of commission, sometimes even after it has been committed, and sometimes for attempt to commit it, even when it is not committed, because of the **intention** to commit Himsa.
- ... 59. The wheel of Jain view-points, extremely sharpened, and difficult to be warded off, would, when used by misguided intellects, **cut off (their) heads**, quickly.
60. Having thus correctly understood what is meant by Himsa, its consequence, its victim, and its perpetrator, persons who embrace (the doctrine) should always avoid Himsa, to the best of their **capacity**.
61. Those who desire avoiding Himsa, should, first of all take care to **renounce** wine, **flesh, honey**, and the five Udumbar fruits.
62. Wine stupefies the mind; one whose mind is stupefied **forgets piety**; and the person who forgets piety commits Himsa without hesitation.
63. And wine is said to be the **birth-place of many creatures** which are generated in liquor; those who are given up to wine, necessarily commit **Himsa**.
64. **Pride, fear**, disgust, ridicule, ennui, grief, sex passion, **anger**, etc., are forms of Himsa; and all these are concomitants of wine.
65. **Flesh** cannot be procured without causing **destruction of life**; one who uses flesh, therefore commits Himsa, unavoidably.
66. If the flesh be that of a buffalo, ox, etc., which has **died** of itself, even then Himsa is caused by the **crushing of creatures** spontaneously born therein.
67. Whether pieces of flesh are raw, or cooked, or in the process of cooking, spontaneously-born **creatures** of the same genus are constantly being generated there.
68. He who eats, or touches, a raw, or a cooked piece of flesh, certainly **kills a group of spontaneously-born creatures** constantly gathering together.
69. Even the smallest drop of honey in the world very often represents the **death of bees**; the fool who uses honey is a **great destroyer**.
70. Even if one uses honey which has been obtained by some trick from honey comb, or which has itself dropped down from it, there is **Himsa** in that case also, because of the destruction of creatures of spontaneous birth born there.
72. The two Udumbaras (Gular and fig) and **fruits** of Pipal, Pakar, and Banyan are **birth places of mobile beings**. Therefore Himsa of those creatures is caused by eating them.



73. Again, if they, the above five fruits be dry, and free from mobile beings, on account of efflux of time, even then in using them there is Himsa, caused by the existence of an **excessive desire** for them.
74. Those pure intellects, who renounce the above eight things, which cause **painful and insufferable calamity**, render themselves worthy of Jain discipline.
75. Those, who, even after listening to the doctrine of Ahimsa, are not able to renounce the Himsa of immobile beings, should at least give up the **Himsa of mobile beings**.
- ...
77. Householders possessed of appropriate articles of enjoyment **have to injure** a limited number of **one-sensed beings**. They should desist from **causing destruction** of other immobile beings.
78. Those who have been impressed with the highest **Ahimsa**-elixir, which leads to immortality, should not be distressed on seeing the improper behavior of the ignorant.
- ...
81. **Animals** should not be killed for guests in the belief that there is no harm in killing goats, etc., for the sake of persons deserving respect.
82. With the idea that a meal prepared from the slaughter of one living being is preferable to that produced by the destruction of many lives, **one should never kill a living being of a higher grade.**
83. **Beings which kill others should not be killed** in the belief that the destruction of one of them leads to the protection of many others.
84. "**These kill many lives, and accumulate grave sin**" Doing this act of mercy, those who injure others should not be killed.
85. "Those in great suffering will on being killed soon obtain **relief from agony**." Do not even kill the distressed one by having grasped the sword of such misconception.
86. It is difficult to obtain happiness. The happy shall, if killed, continue to be happy. Do not please adopt the weapon of this **(false) reasoning for killing** those who are happy.
87. A disciple desirous of piety should not **cut off the head** of his own preceptor when he, by means of constant practice, has attained such perfection of concentration, as leads to a good condition of life.
89. **One should not kill himself** by zealously giving one's own flesh as food to another starving person, seen approaching in front.
90. What person is there who, having a clear intellect, having served teachers well-versed in the various points of view, having realized the essence of the Jaina religion and having adopted Ahimsa, would yield to the delusions (set forth above.)
96. Garhita **speech** is said to be all that, which is **backbiting**, harsh, unbecoming, nonsensical, or otherwise uncanonical.
97. All **speech** which makes another engage in **piercing, cutting, beating**, sloughing, trading, stealing, etc., is Savadya, sinful as it leads to destruction of life, etc.
98. Know all that as Apriya, which causes uneasiness, fear, pain, hostility, grief, **quarrel**, or anguish of mind to another person.
100. Pramatta Yoga having been stated to be the cause of all false speech, a sermon, preaching the renouncement (of vices) and the performance of religious duties, would not be a falsehood, (even if it should be distasteful, or cause **mental pain** to the listener).
102. The taking, by Pramatta yoga, of objects which have not been given, is to be deemed theft, and that is Himsa because it is the **cause of injury**.
103. He, who **seizes the property** of another person deprives him of his vitalities, for all objects are external vitalities of men.
104. There is no exclusivity between **Himsa and theft**. It is well included in theft, because in taking what belongs to another (there is) Pramatta Yoga.

105. Nor is there the defect of overlapping. There is no (**Himsa**), when **passionless saints** take in Karmic molecules because of the absence of Pramatta Yoga, the chief motive.

...

**119. Internal attachment** is proved to be Himsa because of its being a form of Himsa. Attachment of **external objects** certainly establishes the fact of Himsa.

124, 125 & 126 At first for acquiring belief in **Tattwarthas**, the principles, as they are, wrong belief, and the four **Passions of the first degree**, which prevent Right Belief, should be got rid of. Again having suppressed the passions of second (degree) which certainly obstruct partial conduct, laymen approach partial vows. all remaining internal attachments should be suppressed, with self-exertion through humility, contentment and such meditations.

129. Those who take their meals at night cannot avoid Himsa. Therefore abstainers from Himsa, should **give up night-eating** also.

130. Absence of vow, in due to the influence of passions and Himsa is not thereby excluded. How is it possible then to avoid Himsa when food is taken day and night.

131-132-133 If that be so, then one may give up taking food in the day, by eating at night only, one would not be **committing Himsa** at all times. No, it is not so. There is stronger desire in eating at night than in eating in the day, as in the eating of a morsel of flesh and the eating of a morsel of grain. How can one avoid Himsa when food is taken without the light of the sun; even when a lamp is lighted, minute insects get mixed up with eatable.

140. The pure-minded, who thus confines the extent of his activities practices **absolute Ahimsa** for that time by renouncing all Himsa possible in the vast space which has been given up.

141. One should never think of **hunting, victory, defeat, battle**, adultery, theft, etc., because they only lead to sin.

143. One should not without **necessity dig grounds, uproot trees, trample lawns**, sprinkle water etc., nor pluck leaves fruit, and flowers.

144. One should be careful not to give **instruments of Himsa**, such as knife, poison, fire, plough, **sword**, bow etc.

147. He who deliberately renounces all other unnecessary sins, leads his **Ahimsa vow** ceaselessly up to admirable victory.

154, 155, 156. He should pass the day, wrapped in spiritual contemplating; perform Samayika at sunset, vanquish sleep by self-study, and thus pass the night on a clear mat, He should rise in the morning, perform the necessary duties of the time, and engage in **worship of Jina**, as prescribed, with Prasuk objects, (which have **no living germs** in them). The day, the second night, and the half of the third day should carefully be passed in the manner stated above.

....

161. One with pertail vows incurs **Himsa** arising from the use of articles of Bhoga, and Upabhoga, and not otherwise. He should therefore ascertain the reality of things, and renounce these two also, in accordance with his own capacity.

162. The use of all Anant-Kaya **vegetable** must be given up, because in destroying one, infinite (**one-sensed living beings**) are killed.

166. He who being thus contented with a **few limited enjoyments**, renounces the vast majority of them, observes Ahimsa par-excellence because of abstention from considerable Himsa.

172. In making a gift one gets over **greed**, which is a form of Himsa, and hence gifts made to a worthy recipient amount to a renunciation of **Himsa**.

176. "I shall certainly observe Sallekhna properly at the **approach of death**," is the thought one should constantly have and thus be practising the vow prematurely.

177. On account of the absence of any emotion, there is **no suicide** by one acting in this manner, on the certain approach of death, because by the observance of Sallekhana, the passions are attenuated.

178. He who, actuated by passions, puts an **end to his life** by stopping breath, or by water, fire, poison, or weapons, is certainly guilty of **suicide**.
179. In the practice of **Sallekhana (renunciation of the body)**, all passions, which cause Himsa, are subdued, and hence Sallekhana is said to lead to **Ahimsa**.
183. **Mutilating, beating**, typing [*sic*] up, overloading, **withholding food or drink**, are 5 transgressions of the vow of Ahimsa.
189. Sending, **detaining**, speaking out, making gestures, throwing articles, (beyond) limits (are) 5 (breaches) or the second Sheela (Desha Vrata).
190. Uttering **obscene words**, gesticulating with obscene words, misuse of articles of use, gossip, and acting unthinkingly (are) 5 (breaches) of the third Sheela 7 (Anartha-Danda-Vrata).
192. Taking up articles, using seats, passing excrements, **without looking at the sweeping**, forgetting the rules, and lack of interest are 5 (breaches) of Upavasa (fasting).
193. **Eating articles having life**, articles mixed with those having life, articles in contact with those having life, articles too well cooked and aphrodisiacal food are 5 transgressions of the sixth Sheela (Bhogopabhoga Parimana).
194. Delegation of host's duties, **placing the food on Sachitta (with life) articles**, covering the food with Sachitta, not serving meal at proper time, lack of interest are transgressions in Achitta-dana (Atithi-Samvibhaga).
195. A **desire to live, a desire to die**, attachment to friends, recollection of pleasures, and desire for future pleasures, these 5 are (the transgressions) at the time of Sallekhana.
203. Careful movement, careful speech, careful eating, **careful placing and removal of things**, careful evacuation of excrement, are the (5) Samitis to be observed.
- 206, 207 and 208. (1) Hunger, (2) thirst, (3) Cold, (4) heat, (5) insect bite, (6) nudity, (7) ennui, (8) women, (9) walking, (10) sitting, (11) resting on hard earth, (12) abuse, (13) **beating**, (14) begging, (15) non-obtaining, (16) disease, (17) contact with thorny shrubs etc., (18) dirt, (19) respect and disrespect, (20) conceit of knowledge, (21) lack of knowledge, (22) slack belief, are 22 sufferings. These should be ever endured without any feeling of vexation, by one who desires to get rid of **all cause for pain**.

## 4.2 Tattvartha Sutra

The Tattvartha Sutra is one of the main scriptures of Jainism and is accepted as authoritative by each of the faith's main branches (Svetambara, Sthanakavasis, Digambaras). It was written by Acharya Umasvati, who lived around the second century B.C.E.

The source of the following extracts is: Tattvartha Sutra (also written Tatvarth sutra) English translation by Upadhaya Shritsagar (accessed at [www.jainworld.com/phil/tattmain1.htm](http://www.jainworld.com/phil/tattmain1.htm)). It consists of ten separate chapters, averaging between five and ten pages each. The text was searched by scanning and electronic searching of keywords relating to the spiritual, ethical and moral use of force in government and society, and the range of Jain beliefs about *ahimsa* (non-violence). The keywords searched included: right conduct, liberation, pain, suffering, army, police, evil, death, injury, karma, control, stealing, falsehood, violence, quarrelling, binding, beating, mutilating, organisms, ill-cooked, anger, greed, passion, lifeless, scolding, and so on.

The Format used for referencing passages is: chapter number, paragraph number from the original. Some Chapter headings are missing in original translation. The original scripture contained no paragraph, verse or page identifiers beyond the chapter number. Some original

Sanskrit terms or phrases are shown in brackets and/or italics. A list of Jain scriptures is given at [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Jain\\_Agamas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Jain_Agamas).

#### 4.2.1 Summary

The key section is in Chapter 7 (“Ethical Code”), which presents “desisting from injury” (line 1) as the first of the fivefold vows (others: falsehood, stealing, unchastity and attachment). The five observances of non-violence are: control of speech, control of thought, observation of one’s path while walking, care in taking and placing things or objects and examination of food in the sunlight before eating/drinking (2).

“The consequences of violence ... are calamity and reproach in this world and in the next birth” (5). “These five sins should be considered and thought off as the cause of all sufferings” (6. *Duhkhameva va*). “Benevolence towards all living beings, ... compassion and sympathy for the afflicted, and tolerance towards the insolent and ill-behaved are the right sentiments” (7). “The severance of vitalities through *pramattayoga* (the mind, the speech and the body out of passion) is injury or violence” (8).

The five transgressions of non-violence are: binding, beating, mutilating limbs, overloading and withholding food and drink (9). The five transgressions of vows to limit consumables and non-consumables are: taking food containing (one-sensed) organisms, placing food near organisms, mixing food with organisms, taking stimulants and eating ill-cooked food (12).

#### 4.2.2 Extracts from the Tattvartha Sutra

##### Chapter 2

1. The two kinds of disposition arising from subsidence are right belief and right conduct (*Samyaktvacharitre*). 2. The worm, the ant, the bee and man, etc. have each one **more sense** than the preceding one.

##### Chapter 3

1. The thought colouration, thought activity, body, suffering and shape of body are incessantly more and more inauspicious in succession among the infernal beings in the first infernal earth to the seventh infernal earth. 2. They cause pain and suffering to one another (*Parasparodiritaduhkhal*). ...
4. The human beings are of two types i.e. civilized people and the **barbarians** (*Arya Mlechchhashcha*).

##### Chapter 4

2. There are ten grades in each of these classes of **celestial beings** namely the Lord (Indra), his equal (except for the authority and the prosperity), the Minister, the councillor, the **bodyguards**, the **police**, the **army**, the citizens, the servants and the menials.

##### Chapter 5 – Inanimate Entities

1. (*Sukhadubkha-jivitamarano-pagrabashcha*) The function of matter is also to contribute sensuous pleasure, suffering, life and **death** of living beings.
2. (*Parasparopagrabho jivanam*) The function of **souls** is to help one another.

## Chapter 6 – Influx of Karmic Matter

1. (*Kaya-van-manah karma yogah*) The action of the body, the speech organ and the mind is called yoga (activity).
  2. (*Sa asrava*) These three types of yoga cause vibration/throbbing in the space points of soul resulting in influx (*asrava*) i.e. incoming of karmas.
  3. Influx is of two types-the good and the evil caused by virtuous and wicked yoga respectively. Influx of good karmas help purify the soul while the influx of evil karmas take the soul away from its purification.
  4. There are two kinds of influx, namely *samparayik* influx caused to persons with passions, which extends transmigration, and *iriyapath* influx caused to persons **free from passions**, which prevents or shortens **transmigration**. ...
  5. (*Indriya-kashayavratakriyah pancha-chatuh pancha-panchavinshti-sankhyah purvasha bhedah*) The subdivisions of the *samparayik* influx are the five senses (touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing), the four passions (anger, pride, deceitfulness and greed), non-observance of the **five vows** (**killing**, uttering falsehood, stealing, unchastity and attachment) and the following twenty-five activities: ...
  6. *Pradoshiki-kriya* (blaming others in anger)
  7. *Kayiki-Kriya* (act in wicked ways)
  8. *Adhikaran-kriya* (keeping arms and ammunition)
  9. *Paritapiki-kriya* (causing **pain** to the living beings)
  10. *Praniti-patiki kriya* (taking away **life**, senses, energy and respiration) ...
  13. *Pratyayiki-kriya* (make available novel equipment for **violence** etc.) ...
  21. *Prarambha-kriya* (feeling delighted or indulgence in piercing, hewing, **slaughtering** etc. of living beings)
  22. *Parigrahiki-kriya* (preserving **attachment** to worldly objects) ...
7. **Suffering**, sorrow, agony, moaning, injury and lamentation, in oneself, in others or in both, lead to the influx of karmas which cause unpleasant feeling.
8. **Compassion** towards living beings in general and the devout in particular, charity, asceticism with attachment, restraint-cum-non-restraint, involuntary dissociation of karmas without effort, austerities not based on right knowledge, contemplation, equanimity, freedom from greed, these lead to the influx of karmas that cause pleasant feeling.
9. Intense feelings induced by the rise of the **passions** cause the influx of the **conduct-deluding karmas**.
10. **Excessive infliction of injury or pain** (domestic works) and excessive attachment cause the influx of karma which leads to life in the **infernal regions**.
11. **Little infliction** of injury or pain (domestic works) and little attachment cause the influx of life-karma that leads to **human life**.

## Chapter 7 – Ethical Code

1. Desisting from **injury**, falsehood, stealing, unchastity and attachment is the fivefold vow.
2. Control of speech, control of thought, **observing the ground** in front while walking, care in taking and placing things or objects, and **examining the food** in the sunlight before eating/drinking are five observances of **non-violence**. ...
5. (*Hinsadishvrihamutrapaya-vadyadarshanam*) The consequences of **violence**, falsehood, stealing, unchastity and attachment [five sins] are **calamity and reproach** in this world and in the next birth.
6. (*Dubkhameva va*) These five sins should be considered and thought off as the **cause of all sufferings**.
7. **Benevolence towards all living beings**, joy at the sight of the virtuous, **compassion** and sympathy for the afflicted, and tolerance towards the insolent and ill-behaved are the right sentiments.
8. The severance of vitalities through *pramattayoga* (the mind, the speech and the body out of passion) is injury or **violence**.
9. Binding, **beating, mutilating** limbs, overloading and withholding food and drink are the five **transgressions of non-violence**. ...
12. Taking food containing (one-sensed) **organisms**, placed near organisms and mixed with organisms, stimulants and ill-cooked, are the five transgressions of vow to limit consumables and non-consumables. ....
14. **Desire for life**, desire for death, recollection of affection for friends, recollection of pleasures and constant longing for enjoyment, are the five transgressions of *Sallekhana*.

## Chapter 9 – Stoppage and Shedding of Karma

1. The obstruction of influx is stoppage (*samvara*) ....
5. *Iryasamity* (to inspect ground in front while walking), *Bhashasamity* (to speak words which are beneficial, moderate, lovable, undoubtful, not to cause **passions**, not in conflict with the religion),
6. **Supreme forbearance**, ... self-restraint, austerity, renunciation, non-attachment and celibacy constitute virtue or duty. ...
9. There are fourteen stages of **transmigratory** soul. ...
12. Cruel meditation relating to **injury**, untruth, stealing and safeguarding of possessions occurs in the case of laymen with and without partial vows. ...
14. The dissociation of karmas increases innumerable-fold from stage to stage in the ten stages of the right believer ... the saint with destroyed delusion and the spiritual victor (**Jina**).
15. *Pulakah* (observes primary vows, but lapses sometimes), *Bakusha* (observes primary vows perfectly, but cares [for] adornment of the body and implements), *Kushila* (observes primary vows perfectly, but lapses in secondary vows or has controlled all passions except the gleaming ones), *Nirgrantha* (will attain omniscience within Antarmuhurta) and Snataka (Omniscient-Kevali) are the **passionless saints**.

## Chapter 10 – Salvation

1. (Mohakshayaigyana darshana) Omniscience (perfect knowledge) is attained on the destruction of deluding karmas ...
3. As the soul is previously impelled, as it is free from ties or attachment, as the bondage has been snapped and, as it is of the nature of darting upwards, the liberated soul moves upwards.

### 4.2.3 References

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- Pt. Sukhlalji, *Commentary on Tattvartha Sutra*, English Translation by K. K. Dixit, L. D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, India, 1974.
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### 4.3 Commentary

There is no place for human injury, not to speak of war, according to these Jain scriptures. Even the intention to commit violent acts on others is reprehensible and without justification. Since all violent thoughts and actions attract bad karma, there can therefore be no such thing as a just war, as any form of violence leads to further suffering both in response to the violent action and through attachment to this world.

Sikhism is a monotheistic system of thought that emerged in 15th century Punjab with the teachings of Guru Nanak. Though Sikh theology is situated within a general Indic framework, the Sikhs have forged for themselves a unique identity focused around the institution of the Khalsa, a religious order open to both sexes, advocating utmost devotion to Sikh values and a willingness to stand up against tyranny in the name of justice.

Scripture plays a primary role in the life of Sikhs. The *Gurū Granth Sāhib* is without doubt, the most important piece of work in the Sikh religion. It has even inherited the role of living Guruship from the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, making it unrivalled by any other text. The role of the Dasam Granth, the second text presented here, is more complicated. Though it is held in near-equal stature to the Gurū Granth Sāhib by some smaller Sikh sects (such as the *Nihangs*), mainstream Orthodox Sikhs debate both its role and legitimacy. It is never installed alongside the Gurū Granth Sāhib in Orthodox Gurdwaras (Sikh temples). The use of passages from the work in a variety of Sikh prayers complicates the debate, setting tradition against more academic investigations of origins. A tabular comparison of the Gurū Granth Sāhib and the Dasam Granth is provided in Table 5.1.

Apart from these two scriptures, numerous other written works are important to the Sikh community. But which might constitute scripture? Of importance are the works of Bhai Gurdas and Nand Lal Goya, the only items apart from the aforementioned two scriptures that are permitted to be sung in Gurdwaras (McLeod 180). Bhai Gurdas wrote 675 *Kabitts* in Braj, a language which is not commonly studied within the Sikh community. For this reason, the *Kabitts* have been largely neglected. His 39 *Vārs* in Punjabi, however, have enjoyed great popularity as analytical work on the Gurū Granth Sāhib. Bhai Gurdas himself was a devotee of the fifth and sixth Gurus (180). Nand Lal Goya, a disciple of the tenth Guru, wrote two works: the *Divān* (61 Ghazals) and the *Zindagī-Nāmā* (510 couplets), both in Persian. These are devotional works (181).

Another genre of literature which enjoys popularity amongst the Sikhs is the *Janam Sakhis*. These writings are varying hagiographies of Guru Nanak. They are very important as traditional sources of information about the lives of major religious figures: the stories contained within are taught to children from a young age. The *Gurbilās* genre of literature also enjoys popularity. They focus on the heroics of Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh (181), the sixth and tenth Sikh Gurus.

Lastly, worth mentioning are the *rahit-nāmās*. These works are early treatises on *Rahit*, the code of conduct to be followed by Khalsa Sikhs. Though the origins of early works are disputed, tradition maintains that the essence of the *Rahit* was passed on to the community by Guru Gobind Singh (117). The modern day *Rahit* exists in the form of the *Sikh Rahit Maryādā*, a work published by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) in 1950 (123).<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Written by Stephen Gucciardi and A. Walter Dorn.

<sup>129</sup> The SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee) is “a statutory body comprising elected representatives of the Sikhs concerned primarily with the management of sacred Sikh shrines under its control within the territorial limits of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and the Union territory of Chandigarh.” Source: [www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/SGPC](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/SGPC)

Though the works discussed above are important to the Sikh community, only the works of Bhai Gurdas and Nand Lal Goya can even be considered for candidacy as scripture. However, consider the following quote by Sikh historian Hew McLeod:

Unlike the works of Bhai Gurdas and Nand Lal, these three varieties of literature—the janam-sakhis, the *rahit-nāmās*, and works in the *gur-bilās* style—are definitely outside the bounds of canonical scripture. They do not constitute writing that is treated as sacred and accordingly they occupy a lower level in the estimation of the Sikhs (p.182)

Though scripture is fundamental to Sikh religious life, the Sikh experience on the whole has been deeply influenced by other factors. The founding of the Khalsa (literally “Pure” or “devoted”; refers to the community of all Sikhs baptized in the fashion declared by Guru Gobind Singh). The Khalsa is independent of scriptural injunction, as it was formed at the command of the tenth Guru. The place of Sikhs in the world and their own outlook has been powerfully impacted by the Khalsa and other historical circumstances, including the colonial experience in which the Sikhs were recruited as policemen and soldiers. As European models provoked calls for Hindu “reform,” a movement emerged amongst the Sikhs to purge their religion of Hindu influences and assert their own unique identity which was based largely around the Khalsa itself. This reform was successful, as evident by the Sikhs’ treatment as an independent religious tradition. In closing, the importance of scripture to Sikhism is matched historically by the foundation of the Khalsa and the ensuing series of community experiences.

Note: Diacritics for these Sikh passages are used in accordance with the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration. Common modifications to the roman script include macrons, indicating the lengthening of vowels, and a subscript period, indicating consonant retroflexion.

## References

McLeod, W.H. (1989), *The Sikhs – History, Religion and Society*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1989.

*Table 5.1: Comparison of the Gurū Granth Sāhib and the Dasam Granth*

	<b>Gurū Granth Sāhib</b>	<b>Dasam Granth</b>
<b>Authorship</b>	The Gurū Granth Sāhib contains the writings of the first five Sikh Gurus and the ninth, Guru Tegh Bahadur. Also contained are the writings of other figures whose works are perceived to be in line with Sikh teachings.	Tradition attributes authorship to Guru Gobind Singh. Not all agree; some attribute all of the work to him whilst others claim that none of it is his. These positions and everything in between are currently being debated within the Sikh community.



<b>Focus of Text</b>	The primary focus of the Gurū Granth Sāhib is on developing inner peace and finding salvation through the divine <i>nām</i> . The text's focus on the material world extends to discussion of one's need to live a life focused on God. Religious hypocrisies are criticized alongside caste and ritual.	According to tradition, Guru Gobind Singh wrote the Dasam Granth in order to instil a military spirit in Sikhs. The volume itself is a collection of various works, each drawing from various sources. Mythological writings from Persian and Hindu sources are said to serve the purpose of inspiring warriors to fight. Others clarify the role of Guru Gobind Singh and discuss morality. Unlike the Gurū Granth Sāhib, the Dasam Granth is focused heavily on the mortal plane.
<b>Role of Violence</b>	Violence in the Gurū Granth Sāhib is not significantly detailed, its presence relating primarily to symbolic imagery. Spiritual development is frequently described as a battle waged on the battlefield of the mind. Those striving to better themselves are warriors and those who act immorally are doomed. Phrases that may be interpreted as referring to approval of physical violence invariably carry an alternate (and more likely) metaphorical meaning.	Violence plays a prominent role in the Dasam Granth. The mythological material drawn from Hindu and Persian sources which make up the vast majority of the text frequently describes clashes between good and evil forces. See below for further discussion.
<b>Just War Provisions</b>	There is little material in the Gurū Granth Sāhib which is relevant to Just War Theory. Instead, the general position taken seems to be one of pacifism. This is especially evident in the writings of Kabir and Fareed.	Various aspects of just war theory are to be found in the Dasam Granth. The most obvious is Guru Gobind Singh's exaltation to use the sword if necessary for self-defence. Mercy and forgiveness are cited as virtues. Warriors are said to be doing their religious duties as they are combating demons. Also, Guru Gobind Singh clarifies his role as the leader of his community, born to vanquish tyrants.

## 5.1. Gurū Granth Sāhib

### 5.1.1 Background

The *Gurū Granth Sāhib* is the primary scripture of Sikhism. The text's name itself signifies its importance to Sikhs; *Gurū* means teacher or guide, *Granth* means a holy book, and *Sāhib* (like *Śrī*) is a term of respect.<sup>130</sup> The book is perceived to be the last of eleven Sikh *Gurūs*, those previous have been living human beings instead of written works. The scripture is composed of

<sup>130</sup> See: [www.gurbanifiles.org/intro.html](http://www.gurbanifiles.org/intro.html), accessed 15 April 2008.

writings by a variety of spiritual leaders and theologians. Though the bulk of the material is the work of the Sikh *Gurūs*, writings by various saints of Hindu and Muslim backgrounds (*Bhagats*) and poets (including the eleven “*Bhatts*”) are also included. This exemplifies the simple, egalitarian, monotheistic teachings of the Sikhs in which one who contemplates on the singular, supreme divine is tapping into ultimate truth.<sup>131</sup> Writings cognizant of this fact were considered worthy enough to be included in Sikh scripture regardless of the author's background.

Completed in 1604, the Gurū Granth Sāhib was compiled under the watch of Gurū Arjun, the fifth *Gurū*. In 1708, Gurū Gobind Singh transferred both the sanctity and the authority of the gurūship to the Gurū Granth Sāhib itself.<sup>132</sup> He also added the hymns of his father, the ninth guru, Teg Bahādur. This transformation into its final form was marked by a change in religious terminology. Originally known as the *Adi* (first) *Granth*, the scripture became the Gurū Granth Sāhib, the active leader of the Sikh community. Sikhs therefore treat the book as if it is a human *Gurū*, prostrating themselves in front of it and avoiding all actions which may be construed as disrespectful when in its presence. It is to be consulted at the beginning of each day and during the naming ceremonies of children.<sup>133</sup> Though the religious texts of other traditions may point towards God, the Gurū Granth Sāhib is believed to be the clearest and most accurate regarding the divine.<sup>134</sup> It is fundamental to Sikh religious life and is considered the ultimate authority for theological and ethical questions.<sup>135</sup>

The main focus of the Gurū Granth Sāhib is on the relationship between humans and God. Important is the *nām*, or name. Owen Cole points out that it takes on a variety of meanings, much like the Greek term *logos*. Its name can refer to God, God manifest and the word.<sup>136</sup> Salvation is attained only through meditation on the *nām*, not blind ritual.<sup>137</sup> The Gurū Granth Sāhib is fundamentally egalitarian in nature, meaning that salvation is open to all who meditate upon the *nām*. The Hindu caste system is said to have no role in finding salvation and is strongly criticized.<sup>138</sup> God himself is said to be casteless.<sup>139</sup>

### 5.1.2 Summary: Treatment of Violence and Armed Force

The discussion of violence in this scripture is multifaceted. It is used mostly as a literary device in the form of imagery when discussing the power of the *Gurū*'s teachings, but it is also said to be

<sup>131</sup> See:

[www.gurbanifiles.org/translations/English%20Translation%20of%20Siri%20Guru%20Granth%20Sahib.pdf](http://www.gurbanifiles.org/translations/English%20Translation%20of%20Siri%20Guru%20Granth%20Sahib.pdf) 2,13,22, accessed 15 April 2008.

<sup>132</sup> Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>133</sup> W. Owen Cole, *Teach Yourself Sikhism* (London, UK: Hodder Education, 2003), 119.

<sup>134</sup> Gurinder Singh Mann, "Canon Formation in Sikh Studies," *Sikh Religion, Culture and Ethnicity*, Ed. Christopher Shackle, Guharpal Singh and Arvind-pal Singh Mandair (Richmond, Canada: Curzon Press, 2001): 13.

<sup>135</sup> Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Making of Sikh Scripture* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>136</sup> W. Owen Cole, *Teach Yourself Sikhism* (London, UK: Hodder Education, 2003), 127.

<sup>137</sup> *Gurū Granth Sāhib*, 1237.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 349

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 612.

under God's complete control.<sup>140</sup> Those engaged in the struggle against ignorance and evil in the mind are spiritual warriors,<sup>141</sup> though God is ultimately responsible for salvation, life and death.<sup>142</sup> Certain verses in isolation appear to teach pacifism,<sup>143</sup> whilst others seem to support violence when it is approved by God.<sup>144</sup> The works of Kabeer and Fareed, a Hindu and a Muslim *Bhagat* respectively, decry violence itself,<sup>145</sup> as does a verse which seems to convey the spiritual battle as mental, not physical.<sup>146</sup> Other verses point out the hypocrisy of religious leaders who kill and lie.<sup>147</sup>

Little mention, then, is made of justification in armed conflict. The *Dasam Granth*, said to be a collection of Gurū Gobind Singh's personal writings, is much more focused on warfare and the consequences for those acting against God's will.<sup>148</sup> The Gurū Granth Sāhib does not discuss the role of humans in maintaining righteousness through violent means. The few exceptions speak of God approving the actions of warriors who have his blessings.<sup>149</sup>

The peace discussed in this scripture relates not to politics but to a state of mind. This concept of peace is raised repeatedly throughout the entire scripture, achieved through selfless service<sup>150</sup> (p.) and meditation on the *nām*.<sup>151</sup>

### 5.1.2.1 Main finding on armed force

The general position taken on violence seems to be that it is irrelevant with respect to finding salvation. Violence based on worldly obsessions such as greed is contrary to living righteously, but when approved by God it is acceptable. It is possible that humans acting violently may be doing so in accordance with divine will, though this idea is not developed. As mentioned above, a fuller discussion of God and violence can be found in the disputed *Dasam Granth*.

### 5.1.2.2 References and methodology

The version used here of the "Siri Gurū Granth Sāhib" was translated by Sant Singh Khalsa, MD, and is available at [www.gurbanifiles.org/translations/English%20Translation%20of%20Siri%20Guru%20Granth%20Sahib.pdf](http://www.gurbanifiles.org/translations/English%20Translation%20of%20Siri%20Guru%20Granth%20Sahib.pdf). There is no standard, authorised translation of the Gurū Granth Sāhib into English.

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 606.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* 1069.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.* 356, 1198.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 149, 579, 970.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 1375, 1378

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 1105.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.* 662.

<sup>148</sup> Jeevan Deol, "Eighteenth Century Khalsa Identity: Discourse, Praxis and Narrative." *Sikh Religion, Culture and Ethnicity*. Ed. Christopher Shackle, Guharpal Singh and Arvind-pal Singh Mandair (Richmond, Canada: Curzon Press, 2001), 31.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* 149, 579, 970

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* 25-26.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

Various versions have enjoyed periods of popularity. This report uses a popular modern translation by Dr. Sant Singh Khalsa, MD. Sometimes referred to as the “Khalsa Consensus Translation,” this translation uses language easily accessible to the modern reader and enjoys great popularity on the internet. (See: [www.srigranth.org/guru\\_granth\\_sahib.html](http://www.srigranth.org/guru_granth_sahib.html))

**Referencing:** The structure of the Gurū Granth Sāhib is rather complex. The source of quotes is identified by the page number, which has been standardized by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

**Search Method:** Electronic searches were done for the following terms: attack, battle, caste, conflict, death, die, fight, kill, peace, slay, strike, sword, violence, war and weapon.

### 5.1.3 Extracts from the Gurū Granth Sāhib

#### 5.1.3.1 Condemnation of those who kill blindly

(4) Countless fools, blinded by ignorance. Countless thieves and embezzlers. Countless impose their **will by force**. Countless cut-throats and ruthless **killers**. Countless **sinner**s who keep on sinning. Countless liars, wandering lost in their lies. Countless wretches, eating filth as their ration. Countless slanderers, carrying the weight of their stupid mistakes on their heads. Nanak describes the state of the lowly. I cannot even once be a sacrifice to You [God]. Whatever pleases You is the only good done, You, Eternal and Formless One.

(350) He created the air, and He supports the whole world; he bound water and fire together. The blind, ten-headed Raavan had his heads cut off, but **what greatness** was obtained by **killing** him? What Glories of Yours [God's] can be chanted? You are totally pervading everywhere; You love and cherish all. You created all beings, and You hold the world in Your Hands; what greatness is it to put a ring in the nose of the black cobra, as Krishna did? Whose Husband are You? Who is Your wife? You are subtly diffused and pervading in all. Brahma, the bestower of blessings, entered the stem of the lotus, with his relatives, to find the extent of the universe. Proceeding on, he could not find its limits; what glory was obtained by **killing Kansa**, the king?

[*Commentary:* This quote is downplaying the mythology of Hindu texts. God here is shown to be great by his very nature, not by the deeds of supposed incarnations (like Rāma) on this Earth.]

(445) Then came the Silver Age of Trayta Yuga; men's minds were ruled by **power**, and they practiced celibacy and self-discipline. The fourth foot of religion dropped off, and three remained. Their hearts and minds were inflamed with anger. Their hearts and minds were filled with the horribly poisonous essence of **anger**. The kings fought their **wars** and obtained only pain. Their minds were afflicted with the illness of **egotism**, and their self-conceit and **arrogance** increased. If my Lord, Har, Har, shows His Mercy, my Lord and Master eradicates the poison by the Guru's Teachings and the Lord's Name.

(662) The Qazi tells lies and eats filth; the Brahmin **kills** and then takes cleansing baths. The Yogi is blind, and does not know the Way. The three of them devise their **own destruction**.

[*Commentary:* What is being discussed here is the hypocrisy of religious leaders. Muslim leaders are said to have preached about honesty and a *Halal/Haram* based diet without

following said teachings themselves. Brahmins are here being condemned for acting in such a way as contrary to *Ahimsa*. Perhaps some Brahmins would kill when performing sacrifice or when demanding punishment of lower castes? This is only speculation.]

(1237) He [the Lord] is not won over by music, songs or the Vedas. He is not won over by intuitive wisdom, meditation or Yoga. He is not won over by feeling sad and depressed forever. He is not won over by beauty, wealth and pleasures. He is not won over by wandering naked at sacred shrines. He is not won over by giving donations in charity. He is not won over by living alone in the wilderness. He is not won over by **fighting** and dying as a **warrior** in battle. He is not won over by becoming the dust of the masses. The account is written of the loves of the mind. O Nanak, the Lord is won over only by His Name.

### 5.1.3.2 General Pacifism

(87) ... The Gurmukh has conquered his own mind, by applying the Touchstone of the Shabad. He **fight**s with his mind, he settles with his mind, and he is at peace with his mind. All obtain the desires of their minds, through the Love of the True Word of the Shabad...

(356) When you abandon hope and desire, then you become a true Sannyasi. When the Yogi practices abstinence, then he enjoys his body. Through compassion, the naked **hermit** reflects upon his inner self. He slays his own self, instead of **slaying others**.

(1103) You **kill** living beings, and call it a righteous action. Tell me, brother, what would you call an unrighteous action? You call yourself the most excellent sage; then who would you call a **butcher**?

(1198) One whose mind is pleased and appeased, has no egotistical pride. **Violence and greed are forgotten**. The soul-bride intuitively ravishes and enjoys her Husband Lord; as Gurmukh, she is embellished by **His Love**.

(1299) **No one is my enemy**, and no one is a stranger. I **get along with everyone**. Whatever God does, I accept that as good. This is the sublime wisdom I have obtained from the Holy. The One God is pervading in all. Gazing upon Him, beholding Him, Nanak blossoms forth in happiness.

(1375) Kabeer, they oppress living beings and **kill** them, and **call it proper**. When the Lord calls for **their account**, what will their condition be? Kabeer, **it is tyranny to use force**; the Lord shall call you to account. When your account is called for, your face and mouth shall be beaten.

[*Commentary*: Note that Kabeer himself wrote this verse. His style is such that he writes as if he is speaking to himself.]

(1378) Fareed, do not turn around and **strike** those who **strike** you with their fists. **Kiss** their feet, and return to your own home.

[*Commentary*: General nonviolence which seems to be found amongst *Bhagat* writers, hence the similarities with Kabeer.]

### 5.1.3.3 God as Master of Death

(303) But one who slanders the Perfect True Guru, shall be **killed** and destroyed by the **Creator**.

(451) Those Gurmukhs, who are filled with His **Love**, have the Lord as their Saving Grace, O Lord King. How can anyone slander them? The Lord's Name is dear to them. Those whose minds are in harmony with the Lord. All their enemies **attack** them in vain. Servant Nanak meditates on the Naam, the Name of the Lord, the Lord Protector.

(606) The Beloved Himself sets the stage; He performs the plays, and He Himself watches them. The Beloved Himself assumed the form of the child, and **killed** the demons Chandoor, Kansa and Kaysee. The Beloved Himself, by Himself, is the embodiment of power; He shatters the power of the fools and idiots.

(720) The Lord Himself directs the evolution of the world of the five elements; He Himself infuses the five senses into it. O servant Nanak, the Lord Himself **unites us** with the True Guru; He Himself **resolves** the conflicts.

(861) O my mind, meditate on the Lord, and read about the Lord every day. Other than the Lord, no one can **kill** you or save you; so why do you worry, O my mind?

(1069) The True Lord is Himself the Creator. He Himself **kills**, and gives life; there is no other at all. O Nanak, through the Naam, the Name of the Lord, glorious greatness is obtained. Eradicating self-conceit, peace is found.

### 5.1.3.4 Violent imagery

(4) Countless devotees contemplate the Wisdom and Virtues of the Lord. Countless the holy, countless the givers. Countless heroic **spiritual warriors**, who bear the brunt of the attack in **battle** (who with their mouths eat steel). Countless silent sages, vibrating the String of His Love. How can Your Creative Potency be described? I cannot even once be a sacrifice to You. Whatever pleases You is the only good done, You, Eternal and Formless One.

(145) ... Those who praise the Lord in the early hours of the morning and meditate on Him single-mindedly, are the perfect kings; at the right time, they **die fighting** ...

[*Commentary*: Fighting seems to refer to a mental struggle in this context.]

(146) When it **pleases You**, we wield the **sword**, and cut off the heads of our **enemies**. When it pleases You, we go out to foreign lands; hearing news of home, we come back again. When it pleases You, we are attuned to the Name, and when it pleases You, we become pleasing to You. Nanak utters this one prayer; everything else is just the practice of falsehood.

[*Commentary*: Only illustrating devotion to God in poetic form. We do not believe this is talking about actual "holy war", though it does seem to allow some room for violence which is approved by God.]

(307) The stubborn men who fight with the Saints shall never find peace. The Saints seek to bless them with virtue, but they only burn in their egos. What can those wretched ones do, since, from the

very beginning, their destiny is cursed with evil. Those who are struck down by the Supreme Lord God are of no use to anyone. Those who hate the One who has no hatred, according to the true justice of Dharma, they shall perish.

[*Commentary:* This seems to be in reference to a rejection of teachings, not violent action.]

(310) Those who have the treasure of the Naam deep within, all their fears are removed. They are protected by the Lord Himself; others struggle and fight against them, but they only come to death. O servant Nanak, meditate on the Naam; the Lord shall deliver you, here and hereafter.

[*Commentary:* The emphasis seems to be on how salvation is possible only through Nanak's teachings.]

(316) The foolish people, who fight with the Saints, find no peace. The Saints seek to bless them with virtue, but they are burning with egotism.

[*Commentary:* This seems to be in reference to a rejection of teachings, not violent action.]

(338) O people, O victims of this Maya, abandon your doubts and dance out in the open. What sort of a hero is one who is afraid to face the battle? What sort of satee [a woman who dies on her husband's funeral pyre] is she who, when her time comes, starts collecting her pots and pans? Stop your wavering, O crazy people! Now that you have taken up the challenge of death, let yourself burn and die, and attain perfection. The world is engrossed in sexual desire, anger and Maya; in this way it is plundered and ruined. Says Kabeer, do not forsake the Lord, your Sovereign King, the Highest of the High.

[*Commentary:* Some associate the "challenge of death" with physical conflict, though it may refer to the spiritual struggle necessary to overcoming the cycle of death and rebirth.]

(341) The **warrior** who fights on the **battle-field** should keep up and press on. He should not yield, and he should **not retreat**. Blessed is the coming of one who **conquers the one** and renounces the many.

[*Commentary:* We interpret this passage to mean an inner battle: "Battle-field" is often used in reference to inner struggle and the mind. The "one" probably refers to God, the "many" all other distractions. This is in line with surrounding verses discussing contemplation on the Lord.]

(998) The fearless, formless Lord. The Name is Truth. To **chant** it is the most sublime and exalted activity in this world. Doing so, the **Messenger of Death**, the **evil enemy**, is killed. Death does not even approach the Lord's servant. One whose mind is satisfied with the Lord, that servant is known throughout the four ages, in all four directions. If some sinner speaks evil of him, the Messenger of Death chews him up.

(1025) O mortal, abandon falsehood and your worthless ways. Death viciously **kills** the false beings. The faithless cynic is ruined through falsehood and his egotistical mind.

(1105) The **battle-drum** beats in the sky **of the mind**; aim is taken, and the wound is inflicted. The **spiritual warriors** enter the field of battle; now is the time to fight! He alone is known as a **spiritual hero**, who fights in **defense of religion**. He may be cut apart, piece by piece, but he **never leaves the field of battle**.

[*Commentary*: This seems to suggest that the battle is a mental one. The fight for religion seems to be a fight within the mind. This would be consistent with Kabeer's earlier position of force being tyranny.]

(1128 [#1]) One who contemplates the essence of reality remains awake and aware. He **kills** his **self-conceit**, and **does not kill anyone else**.

(1280) ... Those who follow the Guru's Teachings are the true **spiritual warriors**; they have conquered sexual desire and anger. They enter into the True Mansion of the Lord's Presence, embellished and exalted by the Word of the Shabad. Those devotees are pleasing to Your Will, O Lord; they dearly love the True Name. I am a sacrifice to those who serve their True Guru.

(1364) Kabeer, **kill** only that, which, when killed, shall **bring peace**. Everyone shall call you good, very good, and no one shall think you are bad.

[*Commentary*: This quote has to be interpreted on its own, as it does not link to the content which precedes and follows. We once again must rely on the general picture of Kabeer's teachings. This is possibly metaphorical for mental struggle.]

(1412) If you desire to play this game of love with Me, then step onto My Path with your head in hand. When you place your feet on this Path, give Me your head, and do not pay any attention to public opinion.

[*Commentary*: Interpreted by some to refer specifically to the necessity for a willingness to die amongst believers.]

### 5.1.3.5 Possible approval of violence

(149) Those who charm scorpions and handle snakes only brand themselves with their own hands. By the pre-ordained Order of our Lord and Master, they are beaten badly, and struck down. If the self-willed manmukhs **fight with the Gurmukh**, they are **condemned** by the Lord, the True Judge. He Himself is the Lord and Master of both worlds. He beholds all and makes the exact determination. O Nanak, know this well: everything is in accordance with His Will.

[*Commentary*: This quote suggests that there are evil personalities who can righteously be vanquished.]

(579-80) Death would not be called bad, O people, if one knew **how to truly die**. Serve your Almighty Lord and Master, and your path in the world hereafter will be easy. Take this easy path, and you shall obtain the fruits of your rewards, and receive honor in the world hereafter. Go there with your offering, and you shall merge in the True Lord; your honor shall be confirmed. You shall obtain a place in the Mansion of the Lord Master's Presence; being pleasing to Him, you shall enjoy the pleasures of His Love. Death would not be called bad, O people, if one knew how to truly die. **The death of brave heroes is blessed, if it is approved by God**. They alone are proclaimed as **brave warriors** in the world hereafter, who receive true honor in the Court of the Lord. They are honored in the Court of the Lord; they depart with honor, and they do not suffer pain in the world hereafter. They meditate on the One Lord, and obtain the fruits of their rewards. Serving the Lord, their fear is dispelled. Do not place yourself above others; dwell within your own mind. The Knower Himself knows everything. The death of brave heroes is blessed, if it is approved by God.

[*Commentary*: One interpretation of this passage is that one's death is blessed if one has spent his or her life meditating on God. Another possible interpretation is that a devotee



acting according to God's will in general is acting righteously. This would therefore allow for later development of teachings surrounding just violence. Louis Fenech points out that this hymn's intended use is focused on occasions of mourning, the message being that "a person's passing should not be mourned, especially if that person piously meditated on the divine name..."<sup>152</sup>]

(970) Those who are branded with Your brand fight bravely in battle; those without Your brand run away.

[*Commentary*: This quote establishes a connection between performance in battle and the approval of God. It follows that violent action can have God's approval. Another interpretation is possible – the "battle" may signify some sort of mental struggle against negativity or inner forces.]

### 5.1.3.6 Peace

(2)...O Nanak, sing of the Lord, the Treasure of Excellence. **Sing**, and listen, and let your mind be filled with love. Your pain shall be sent far away, and **peace** shall come to your home....

(11)...Those who meditate on You, Lord, those who **meditate** on You – those humble beings dwell in **peace** in this world....

(13) I am poor and meek, God, but I belong to You! Save me – please save me, O Greatest of the Great! Servant Nanak takes the Sustenance and Support of the Naam. In the Name of the Lord, he enjoys celestial **peace**.

(13) Listen, my friends, I beg of you: now is the time to serve the Saints! In this world, earn the profit of the **Lord's Name**, and hereafter, you shall dwell in **peace**.

(22) The jewel of the mind is priceless; through the Name of the Lord, honor is obtained. Join the Sat Sangat, the True Congregation, and find the Lord. The Gurmukh embraces love for the Lord. Give up your **selfishness**, and you shall find **peace**; like water mingling with water, you shall merge in absorption.

(25-26) This body is softened with the Word of the Guru's Bani; you shall find **peace**, doing seva (**selfless service**). All the world continues coming and going in reincarnation.

(31) **Serving** the True Guru brings a deep and profound peace, and one's desires are fulfilled. Abstinence, truthfulness and self-discipline are obtained, and the body is purified; the Lord, Har, Har, comes to dwell within the mind. Such a person remains blissful forever, day and night. Meeting the Beloved, peace is found.

(36) In **egotism**, all must account for their actions. In this accounting, there is no peace. Acting in **evil and corruption**, people are immersed in corruption. Without the Name, they find no place of rest. In the City of **Death**, they suffer in agony.

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<sup>152</sup> Louis E. Fenech, "Martyrdom and the Sikh Tradition," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 177, No. 4 (Oct. – Dec., 1997): 631.

(163) God Himself bestows wisdom; meditate on the Name of the Lord. By great good fortune, one meets the True Guru, who places the Ambrosial Nectar in the mouth. When egotism and duality are eradicated, one intuitively merges **in peace**. He Himself is All-pervading; He Himself links us to His Name.

(179) Like a boat in the ocean of fear; like a lamp which illumines the darkness; like fire which takes away the pain of cold. Just so, **chanting** the Name, the mind becomes peaceful.

#### 5.1.3.7 Caste

(274) He is a true Pandit, a religious scholar, who instructs his own mind. He searches for the Lord's Name within his own soul. He drinks in the Exquisite Nectar of the Lord's Name. By that Pandit's teachings, the world lives. He implants the Sermon of the Lord in his heart. Such a Pandit is not cast into the womb of **reincarnation** again. He understands the fundamental essence of the Vedas, the Puraanas and the Simritees. In the unmanifest, he sees the manifest world to exist. He gives instruction to people of **all castes** and social classes.

(300) ... The Kh'shatriyas, the Brahmins, the low **caste** Soodras, the Vaisha workers and the outcast pariahs are **all saved, meditating** on the Lord...

(349) ... Recognize the Lord's Light within all, and do not consider **social class** or status; there are no classes or castes in the world hereafter.

(612) ... The Guru has shown mercy to servant Nanak; I see the **casteless**, immaculate Lord everywhere.

(1128 [#2]) Of the four castes, whoever remains awake and aware is released from birth and death.

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## 5.2 Dasam Granth

### 5.2.1 Background

The *Dasam Granth*, named in full the *Dasve Pāṭśāh dā Granth* (book of the tenth emperor), is a collection of writings traditionally attributed to the tenth Sikh *gurū*, Gurū Gobind Singh. In the words of scholar W.H. McLeod, "the Dasam Granth as a whole is seldom invoked and little understood [in the Sikh tradition ]."<sup>153</sup> This description contrasts the *Dasam Granth* with the Gurū Granth Sāhib, as it is considered the most holy scripture of Sikhism despite the fact that the scripture is acknowledged to contain the works of multiple writers. By contrast, Gurū Gobind Singh is said to have composed the *Dasam Granth* in an effort to inspire Sikhs to take up arms in defence of their religion and of righteousness.<sup>154</sup> As a result, violent imagery is extremely commonplace, especially with respect to the sword and other weapons (see, especially the section title *Śastar Nām Mālā*). Also present is a variety of Hindu Puranic tales, each of which stresses the destructive aspect of God when dealing with those who defy truth and righteousness.

The historical context for the *Dasam Granth's* composition is the change in the Sikh community that began with the martyrdom of the fifth *gurū*, Gurū Arjun, in 1606. This direct act of violence directed at the Sikhs by the ruling Mughals forced the next *gurū*, Gurū Hargobind, to further assert the role of the *Gurū* as leader of the community. He chose to symbolize this by wearing two swords, one symbolizing his spiritual authority (*pīrī*) and the other his temporal authority (*mīrī*).<sup>155</sup> Gurū Hargobind also built the *Akāl Takht* at Amritsar (currently part of the Golden Temple complex) as a center of military planning and poetic recitation of heroic deeds.<sup>156</sup>

Gurū Gobind Singh built upon Hargobind's example and made it his goal to ensure that the Sikh community would be able to defend itself. In 1699 he created the *Khālsā*, a sacred order of Sikhs who promise to abide by rules of conduct and defend religion and righteousness whenever necessary. This action explicitly formalized the changes which had occurred in the community. As a consequence of the *Khālsā's* foundation, being a follower of the *Gurū* extends beyond personal worship and into the realm of righteous action on this physical plane of existence. Sikhs have a role to play in vanquishing those who challenge truth and righteousness, a role endorsed by God himself.

As mentioned above, the *Dasam Granth* is a collection of various writings. The first is the *Jāp Sāhib*, a hymn discussing the qualities of God. A primary theme is God as the punisher of wrong doers and upholder of righteousness. Next is the *Akāl Ustat* which also focuses primarily on theology surrounding God. Extensive use is made of imagery, especially God as the destructive Goddess (p.78). Third is the *Bacitra Nāṭak*. Its first portion is similar to the two works which

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<sup>153</sup> W.H. McLeod, *The Sikhs - History, Religion and Society* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1989), p.90.

<sup>154</sup> "Glory of Sri Dasam Granth Sahib," *SearchGurbani.com*, [www.searchgurbani.com/main.php?book=dasam\\_granth&action=intro](http://www.searchgurbani.com/main.php?book=dasam_granth&action=intro); accessed 2 June 2008.

<sup>155</sup> W.H. McLeod, *The Sikhs - History, Religion and Society* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1989), p.4.

<sup>156</sup> Kushwant Singh. *A History of the Sikhs - Volume One: 1469-1839* (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.63.

precede it whilst its second is an autobiography. Gurū Gobind Singh repeatedly makes use of analogies comparing God to weapons (pp.94–95). The fourth section of the *Dasam Granth*, subdivided into the *Caṇḍī Caritr*, *Caṇḍī Caritr II* and *Caṇḍī dī vār*, describes the exploits of the destructive Hindu Goddess, *Caṇḍī* (p.195). This section is followed by the *Gyān Prabodh* which is similar in character to the *Akāl Ustat*. Also included is a dialogue between God and a soul in which the *Dharma* of politics is discussed; a character (Yadhishtira) from the *Mahābhārata* being cited as an example of one following proper duty (p.354). A set of writings follow, entitled *Caubīs Avatār*, *Brahmā Avatār* and *Rudra Avatār*. The first of these writings discusses the incarnations of *Viṣṇu*, the second of *Brahmā* and the third of *Śiva*. J.S. Grewal argues that this section, along with the earlier discussion of *Caṇḍī*, serve the purpose of highlighting how force can be used righteously if it is on God's behalf.<sup>157</sup>

The seventh section contains the *Śabad Hazāre*, a group of philosophical and spiritual hymns. The eighth section, the *Savāīye*, describes both God and the *Khālsā*. This is followed by the *Khālsē dī Mehimā*, four short verses in which Gurū Gobind Singh praises the *Khālsā* and speaks of it as being at the root of his success (p.1355). The ninth portion of the *Dasam Granth* is called the *Śastar Nām Mālā*. This portion focuses on God as protector of his followers (p.1356). The majority of the work lists various weapons, many of which are identified with God. The *Caritropakhyāṇ* follows and is, by far, the largest section of the *Dasam Granth*. It consists primarily of stories relating to women. Also contained within is the *Kabayo Bāc Bentī Caupāī*, a section which deals with God's role in the protection of devotees (p.1465). It is repeated by Sikhs during evening prayers.

The *Hikāyats* are last in this text. The first, the *Zafarnāma*, is a letter written to the Mughal emperor by Gurū Gobind Singh. He criticizes the man for his army's ill conduct and then discusses religious matters. Gurū Gobind Singh's direct endorsement of violence in dire circumstances is notable (p.1471). The remaining *Hikāyats* are tales derived from classical Persian sources. Each teaches some kind of moral lesson.

The present review does not opine about the legitimacy of the *Dasam Granth*, an issue which remains relevant and frequently debated in the 21st century. Regardless, the reader should know that opinions amongst Sikhs range from complete acceptance to total rejection of this text. The role it has played in the Sikh community with respect to attitudes regarding war and violence is to be examined here. That being said, it would be faulty to claim that the verses of the *Dasam Granth* have been the primary contributors in developing said attitudes. Instead, the work embodies the spirit and goals of Gurū Gobind Singh, which culminated in the creation of the *Khālsā*. The existence of the *Khālsā* and the image of the *Sant Sipahi* (Saint-Soldier) which built up around the tenth Gurū<sup>158</sup> have been the driving force in the Sikh concept of the *dharamyuddh*, or “war of righteousness.” Both theologically and in practice, at least within the “orthodox” community of Sikhs, the work as a whole is not equal to the Gurū Granth Sāhib, the literal head of the community.<sup>159</sup> That is not to say that the *Dasam Granth* is of no importance as portions are recited during prayer on a regular basis. It would simply be faulty to posit its pages as the main source of the *Khālsā*'s militancy.

<sup>157</sup> J.S. Grewal. *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.76.

<sup>158</sup> W.H. McLeod, *The Sikhs - History, Religion and Society* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1989), p.55.

<sup>159</sup> Hew McLeod. *Sikhism* (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1997), p.176.

### Texts Used:

“Sri Dasam Granth Sahib”, translated by Sant Singh Khalsa, available at [searchgurbani.com/main.php?book=dasam\\_granth&action=pagebypage](http://searchgurbani.com/main.php?book=dasam_granth&action=pagebypage) (It contains, 1,477 pages. The page numbers of this Gurmukhi/English online text do not conform to the printed Punjabi version of 1,428 pages.)

“Chritro Pakhyaan – Tales of Male-Female Tricky Deceptions from Sri Dasam Granth,” translated by Pritpal Singh Bindra. The *Kabayo Bāc Bentī Caupaī* has been sourced from Sant Singh Khalsa’s translation.

“Tales in Persian (Hikayaat) from Dasam Granth”, translated by Pritpal Singh Bindra. The *Zafarnāma* has been sourced from Sant Singh Khalsa’s translation.

Referencing format: Quotes are preceded by referencing in the format of “[Page#], L[Line#] (Section).” Note that the *Caritropakhyāṇ* and the *Hikāyats* are sourced from independent works by Pritpal Singh Bindra and can only be found in the “Mythological Inspiration” section. The works are separated by a horizontal bar.

Search Method: Electronic searches were not performed. The text was examined visually due to the prominence of violence in the text.

## 5.2.2 Summary: treatment of violence and armed force

The Dasam Granth uses violent language in a variety of ways. The first is centered on God and emphasises his pervasiveness in all aspects of existence, exerting destructive as well as creative energies (pp.5, 9, 10). He both gives and takes away (p.36). Next it focuses specifically on God as a punisher of enemies and protector of the righteous (pp.21, 48). This language is precise about God's role in destroying evil doers (pp.28, 78). One quote (p.339) goes so far as to connect God's destructive power to a contemporary eighteenth century event: the struggle against Pathan enemies. This language clearly serves the purpose of inspiring those Sikhs who engage in armed conflict on a regular basis.

A significant portion of the Dasam Granth makes extensive use of weapons imagery linked to God (pp.94, 95). God's use of weapons is linked to his role in vanquishing sin and evil (pp.97, 102, 108, 109). The *Shastar Nām Mālā* lists various weapons when asking God for protection (p.1356), and identifies God with the physical weapons themselves (pp.1357, 1362).

The Dasam Granth also provides many accounts of human warriors in battle (pp.119, 121, 122). They are glorified as martyrs (pp.125, 146) and righteous fighters (pp.273, 275). The most important human warrior, however, is Gurū Gobind Singh. His purpose in life is said to be his role in vanquishing evil human opponents, a political position which is contrasted against the actions of the previous Gurūs (p.138). His success in battle is granted through God’s will (pp.148, 155). Though he names mercy and forgiveness as necessary virtues (p.1344), violence is named as an appropriate last resort (p.1471).

Hindu and Muslim mythological tales constitute the bulk of the Dasam Granth. These tales serve as inspiration for Sikh warriors who are ready to go to battle. In identifying God with various weapons, mention is made of previous battles against a variety of demons and divine beings

(pp.14, 15). The ideal king is said to be one who goes to battle without any reservation when it is demanded of him by his people (pp.18-19). Reference is made to the violent exploits of Vishnu (p.178), the Goddess (p.195) and King Yadhishtra (Yudhiṣṭhira) of the *Mahābhārata* (p.354, 379).

In summary, the role of violence in the Dasam Granth is linked to God as the vanquisher of enemies, either directly or through divine or human instruments. This is discussed both outright and in the form of poetic weapon imagery. It is also exemplified through the acts of God in Hindu mythology. Above all, Gurū Gobind Singh embodies the destructive power of God in human form; his birth occurring for the purpose of vanquishing evil in this earthly realm. Clearly, there is acceptance of the notion of divinely sanctioned armed force.

### 5.2.3 Extracts from the Dasam Granth

(emphasis added)

#### 5.2.3.1 God as Lover and Destroyer, as All

(5, L2, Jāp Sāhib) Salutation to Thee O All-loving Lord ! Salutation to Thee O **All-destroying** Lord!

(9, L11, Jāp Sāhib) Salutation to Thee O Benign **Protector** Lord! Salutation to Thee O **Heinous-actions-Performer** Lord!

(10, L8, Jāp Sāhib) Thou Pervadest netherworld, heaven and space and **Destroyer** of innumerable sins.

(13, L2, Jāp Sāhib) Thou art present in all direction and conners [*viz*] and Pervadest the Universe as **Love**.

(15, L8, Jāp Sāhib) Thou art capable of doing everything, Thou **Destroyest** all and Sustainest all.

(31, L1, Jāp Sāhib) Salutation to Thee O Originator of Food! Salutation to Thee O Embodiment of **Peace**!

(36, L12, Akāl Ustat) Somewhere Thou givest inexhaustible gifts to emperors and somewhere Thou **deprivest** the emperors of their kingdoms.

[*Commentary*: Stressing God as an all pervading being rather than a political one.]

(37, L10, *Akāl Ustat*) Somewhere Thou art abode of **Dharma**, righteousness), somewhere All-Pervading, somewhere a celibate, somewhere a lustful person, somewhere a donor and somewhere a taker.

(L14) Somewhere becoming a **soldier**, Thou practisest arms and somewhere becoming a **kshatriya**, Thou **slayest the enemy** or be slayed Thyself.

[*Commentary*: Stressing God as an all pervading being rather than a political one.]

### 5.2.3.2 Inspirational language

(9, L7, Jāp Sāhib) Salutation to Thee O **Weapon-wielder** Lord! Salutation to Thee O **Weapon-user** Lord!

(11, L8, Jāp Sāhib) Salutation to Thee O **Unconquerable** Lord! Salutation to Thee O **Invincible** Lord!

(21, L3, Jāp Sāhib) That Thou **Protectest** the devotees. That Thou **punishest** the evil-doers.

(24, L7, Jāp Sāhib) Salutation to Thee O **Destroyer** of Tyrants Lord! Salutation to Thee O Companion of all Lord!

(25, L8, Jāp Sāhib) That Thou art the **Penaliser** of enemies. That Thou art the **Supporter** of the poor.

(28, L5, Jāp Sāhib) O Lord! Thou art the **killer** of evil persons. O Lord! Thou art the ornamentation of Earth.

L14

O Lord! Thou art the **life** of the Universe. O Lord! Thou art the **destroyer** of evil-doers.

(48, L2, Akāl Ustat) The Sustainer and **Destroyer** of the Universe is Benevolent towards the poor, **tortures** the enemies, preserves ever and is without the snare of death.

(78, L11-12, Akāl Ustat) Thy Nature from the very beginning is to **punish** the multitudes of vicious people, to **destroy** the demons and to uproot the tyrants.

Thou hast profound discipline of **killing the demon** named Chachhyar, of **liberating** the sinners and saving them from hell.

(86, L5, Akāl Ustat) He always **Sustains** the Lowly, **protects** the saints and **destroys** the enemies.

(L10) He even **destroys** them who are mighty and Glorious and assail the unassailable and responds [to] the devotion of perfect love.

(91, L6, Akāl Ustat) He is the **death** of death and **smasher** of enemies; He is the **Protector** of Friends and **subduer** of excellence.

(339, L8-11, Gyān Prabodh) He endures everything **peacefully**, He is engrossed in attainment of perfection, and He is the Only Lord who pervades in all limbs.

He is the remover of darkness, the **masher of the Pathans** of Khorasan, **perisher** of the egoists and idlers, He is described as the **destroyer** of people full of vices.

Whom should we worship except the Lord who is the **Vanquisher** of the Conquerors, giver of the Glory of **conquest** and who shoots the miraculous **arrows** from His bow.

Whom else should we adore except him who is the Giver of Truth and Drier of falsehood and performer of Graceful acts?

(345, L10, Gyān Prabodh) The clique of tyrants is **suppressed**; such is the glamour of Thy metropolis, world).

(1350, L9, Savaīye) He [God] is Primal, Blemishless, Beginningless, Maliceless, Limitless, Indiscriminate and Fearless; He is the Formless, Markless, Lord **Protector** of the lowly and ever compassionate.

### 5.2.3.3 Weapons imagery, including God's

(94, L11, Bacitra Nāṭak) I salute the Glorious **SWORD** with all my heart's affection.

(95, L1-4, Bacitra Nāṭak) The **sword** chops well, chops the forces of fools and this mighty one bedecks and glorifies the battlefield.

It is the unbreakable staff of the arm, it has the powerful luster and its light even bedims the radiance of the sun.

It brings happiness to the saints, **mashing** the vicious ones, it is the **destroyer** of sins and I and [sic] under its refuge.

Hail, hail to the cause of the world, saviour of the universe, it is my preserver, I hail its victory.

(L7) Who is Formless, Eternal, Amorphous and Ultimate Bliss. Who is the Cause of all the Powers, I salute the **wielder of the Sword**.

(97, L8, Bacitra Nāṭak) He holds the **bow** in His left hand and the terrible **sword**, in the right). He is the Supreme Effulgence of all lights and sits in His Great Glory.

[*Commentary*: Masculine pronouns in the extracts of this section from the Bacitra Nāṭak are referring to God in specific.]

(102, L2, Bacitra Nāṭak) He, who wields the **sword** in his hand, he is the remover of millions of sins.

(L9) The **sword** appears impressive in his hand, seeing which the sins run away.

(108, L11-14, Bacitra Nāṭak) Salutation to him, who wields **spear**, double-edged sword, **sword** and **dagger**, Who is ever monomorphic and ever without vices.

Salutation to Him, who is the wielder of bow in His hands and who also carries the staff, Who hath spread His Light in all the fourteen worlds.

I salute the **arrow** and the **gun**, I salute the lustrous **sword**, which is impenetratable and indestructible.

I salute the great **mace** and **lance**, which have no equal or second in bravery.

(109, L3-7, Bacitra Nāṭak) Salutation to Him, who hath sharp grinder teeth, which are thick and strong.

Salutation to Him, who hath the **arrows** and the **cannon**, who hath **destroyed** the enemies.

Salutation to Him, Who holds the straight **sword** and the **bayonet**, Who hath **reprimanded** the tyrants.

I salute all the **weapons** of various names.

I salute all kinds of **armour**.

(L12) In this Iron age, the supreme trust is only for KAL [**death**], Who is the **Sword**-incarnate and hath mighty arms.

(332, L12, Gyān Prabodh) Thou art the bearer of **sword** in Thy hand and remover of the strength of the forces of foolish tyrants.



(1346, L6, Shabad Hazāre) O the wielder of **bow** ! the Patient ! the Prop of earth ! the Lord without evil ! and wielder of the **sword** !

(1356, L6-9, Shastar Nām Mālā) O Lord ! Protect us by creating Saang, Sarohi, Saif (Sword), As, Teer (arrow) tupak (gun), Talwaar (sword), and other **weapons** and armours causing the destruction of the **enemies**.

O Lord ! Creat [*vi*] As, Kirpan (sword), Dharaddhari, Sail, Soof, Jamaadh, Tegh (saber), Teer (saber), Teer (arrow), Talwar (sword), causing the destruction of armours and enemies.

As, Kripan (sword), Khanda, Khadag (sword), Tupak (gun), Tabar (hatchet), Teer (arrow), Saif (sword), Sarohi and Saihathi, all these are our adorable seniors.

Thou are the Teer (arrow), Thou are Saihathi, Thou art Tabar (**hatchet**), and Talwaar (sword); he, who remembers Thy Name crosses the dreadful ocean of existence.

(1357, L1, Shastar Nām Mālā) O Lord ! Protect us by **smashing** the armour with the blows of Thy hands with the help of As, Kripan (sword), Khanda, Kharag, Saif, Tegh, and Talwaar (sword).

(1362, L9, Shastar Nām Mālā) O Significant Baan (arrow), the son of the **bow** and **destroyer** of the armour ! even bring victory to us and fulfill our tasks.

#### 5.2.3.4 Warriors

(119, L8-12, *Bacitra Nāṭak*) Strong banners have been fixed and highly infuriated the heroes are engaged in war.

Holding their **swords** and daggers, they are fighting in great anger.

The winsome great **heroes**, with their fighting, make the earth tremble.

The warriors are fighting with their **weapons** in great excitement, the weapons as well as the armour are glistening.

There is the great **steel-killing** with weapons like swords and daggers.

(121, L4, *Bacitra Nāṭak*) They fight, forgetting all sorrows and several of them move towards heaven.

(122, L7, *Bacitra Nāṭak*) They have slanting whiskers on their faces and fight **without caring** for their life.

(125, L6, *Bacitra Nāṭak*) All the fighters engaged in war against their **enemies**, ultimately fell as **martyrs**.

(146, L8, *Bacitra Nāṭak*) Those fought attained **martyrdom**, thousand fled away.

(273, L12-13, *Caṇḍī Caritr*) With the use of weapons and arms, the winsome armours were being cut; And the **warriors** performed their **religious** duties in a nice manner.

(275, L9-12, *Caṇḍī Caritr*) The resonance of trumpets was precipitating the youthful warriors.

Those brave men were jumping and engaged in **chivalrous** acts.

In great rage, the warriors showed signs of anger on their faces.

They were striking their swords.

(472, L9-10, *Caubīs Avatār*) Holding their bows in their hands, excessively glorious and **proud** warriors have marched forward,  
And with the clattering of their weapons, the bodies of the enemies are being **chopped** into two parts.

(500, L11, *Caubīs Avatār*) The army is swelling forward like the clouds, from all the four side[s], and it appears that there is a large gathering of peacocks in the forest.

### 5.2.3.5 Guru Gobind Singh (GGS), violence and religion

(138, L10-14, *Bacitra Nāṭak*) The Lord asked me [GGS] to spread **Dharma**, and **vanquish** the **tyrants** and **evil-minded** persons.

I have taken birth of this purpose, the saints should comprehend this in their minds.

(I have been born) to spread Dharma, and **protect** saints, and **root out tyrants** and evil-minded persons.

All the earlier incarnations caused only their names to be remembered.

They did not **strike the tyrants** and did not make them follow the path of Dharma.

(148, L3, *Bacitra Nāṭak*) He aimed and shot the second arrow towards me, the Lord **protected** me, his arrow only grazed my ear.

(L10) Then I aimed the arrow on a warrior and **killed** him.

(L14) I gained victory through the **favour** of the Eternal Lord (KAL).

(155, L9, *Bacitra Nāṭak*) They could not touch me because of the Grace of the Lord and fled away ultimately.

(285, L7, *Caṇḍī Caritr*) All the saints were pleased because the **tyrants** have been destroyed.

(1344, L6, *Shabad Hazāre*) Eat less and sleep less, cherish mercy and forgiveness;

[*Commentary*: This quote shows how violence is not the first recourse when dealing with problems.]

(1355, L8-9, *Khālse dī Mehimā*) By the **kindness** of these Sikhs, I have **conquered** the wars and also by their kindness, I have bestowed charities; by their kindness the clusters on sins have been destroyed and by their kindness my house is full of wealth and materials;

By their kindness I have received education and by their kindness all my enemies have been destroyed; by their kindness I have been greatly adorned, otherwise there kindness I have been greatly adorned, otherwise there are crores [tens of millions] of humble person like me.

[*Commentary*: Guru Gobind Singh praising the Sikh community]

(1465, L6, *Kabayo Bāc Bentī Caupai*) **Destroy**, O Lord ! all my enemies and **protect** me with Thine own Hands.

(L13)

May Thou ever Bestow Thy favours on my side; Protect me O Lord ! Thou, the Supreme **Destroyer**.

(1466, L9, *Kabayo Bāc Bentī Caupai*) He bestows Divine virtues and **happiness** on His servants; He **destroys** the enemies instantly.

(1467, L14, *Kabayo Bāc Bentī Cauṇai*) O Lord ! keep me now under Thy **protection**; protect my [Guru Gobind Singh's] disciples and destroy my enemies;

(1468, L1-3, *Kabayo Bāc Bentī Cauṇai*) All the villains creations outrage and all the **infidels be destroyed** in the battlefield.

O Supreme **Destroyer** ! those who sought Thy **refuge**, their **enemies** met painful death;  
The persons who fell at Thy Feet, Thou didst remove all their troubles.

(1470, L6-7, *Zafarnāma*) The Lord is Omniscient, the **Protector** of the lowly; He, the **Friend** of the poor, is the **Destroyer** of the enemies.

He is the **Source** of all virtues, keeper of **Dharma**; He knows everything and is the **Source of all Scriptures**.

(1471, L8, *Zafarnāma*) When **all other methods fail**, it is proper to hold the sword in hand.

[*Commentary*: **Key phrase** justifying violence.]

(1477, L6, *Zafarnāma*) When one man is attacked by lakh (100,000), the Generous Lord gives him **protection**.

### 5.2.3.6 Symbolic/Mythological Inspiration

(14, L1, *Caritropakhyaṇ*) You are the Broad **Sword** with decapitating edge.

You are the **Arrow**, Dagger, (and the sword from regions of) Halb, South, and West.

I can envision you to the limits of my perception.

(L5) With you the dread of war increases. The great rulers pray to you and, with the swords and arrows, **Annihilate** the armies.

Guising as Narsing, the Sphinx, you smashed Harnakash.

And incarnating as Varah in the form of a boar, You bore the weight of the earth.

(15, L9, *Caritropakhyaṇ*) The cutting dagger suits your hands, and you have **obliterated** the demons of Chund and Mund.

You **invaded** the enemies called Rakat Beej, and you **protected** the divinity, as well.

(L11) You beat the **drum** of invasion and, then, jovially, penetrated the warfare.

Holding eight weapons in your eight arms, you won over the invincible brave-enemies, and holding them from their hair knocked them down.

(19-20, L47, *Caritropakhyaṇ*) From a straw You can raise my status to as high as Sumer Hills and there is none other as **benevolent** to the poor as You.

There is none other as **pardonable** as You.

A little service to You is abundantly **rewarded** instantly.

In the Kal-age one can only depend on the **sword**, the faculty and self determination.(47)

[*Commentary*: According to Sikhism, we are currently in the “Kal-age,” a time defined by a decline in righteousness.]

(18-19, L30, *Hikāyats*) (The lame) has no feet to step into bad deeds, and, in the **war**, he does not turn back like thousand others.

L37-9

‘He does not defile his hands by accepting bribes.  
‘Rather he raises them to put to dust the **foes** of the king.  
‘In the jungle he does not give chance to the **enemy**,  
‘By throwing arrows and brandishing the **sword**.  
‘During the action he do[es] not let the horses rest,  
‘And does not let the enemy enter the country.

L45-50

‘Except God, one who does not **fear** any body,  
‘He treads upon the enemy **eliminating** him in the dust.  
‘He remains alert through out the battle,  
‘And uses hands and feet to throw **arrows** and shoots **guns**.  
‘To do the justice, he always girds up his lions [*śi*],  
‘And remains meek in the company of the meek.  
‘Neither he depicts any **hesitation** during the war,  
‘Nor he gets scared while facing gigantic **enemies**.  
‘If there has been such a dauntless person,  
‘Who remains **prepared for war** remaining domesticated,  
‘And his operations are approved by people,  
‘He is revered as the **saviour king**.’

[*Commentary*: A king is here speaking of an ideal ruler and military leader.]

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(178, L1-2, *Caṇḍī Caritr*) When the Lord Vishnu awoke from sleep, he made preparations for **war**. So that the demons may decrease in number and the rule of gods be increased.

(186, L4-5, *Caṇḍī Caritr*) By **chopping** the forces of the enemy, such a great quantity of blood fell on the ground.

As though the Lord-God hath created the eighth ocean along with already created seven oceans.

(195, L6, *Caṇḍī Caritr*) The mighty goddess [Caṇḍīka] manifested herself and in great **rage**, she engrossed her mind in thoughts of **war**.

(354, L3-4, *Gyān Prabodh*) This world mentions four categories of Charities; which are these categories, tell me Graciously.

One is political discipline, one is ascetic’s discipline; one is householder’s discipline, one is ascetic’s discipline.

....

(L14) He, Yadhishtira) broke the unbreakable ones in the four khandas (regions), He **destroyed** the Kauravas with great might in the **war** of Kurukshetra.

[*Commentary*: 354L2- (359 L12) contains a description of Yadhishtira's actions in the *Mahābhārata*, in line with duty. He is the ideal in conquering rebels.]

(379, L7-8, *Gyān Prabodh*) On the other side Yudhishtira was bound by **Kshatriya** discipline, And was performing **wonderful and holy Karmas**.

(441, L1, *Caubīs Avatār*) All the warriors appeared absorbed in **warfare** in the battle-field, and **Vishnu** caused the death and fall of the enemy.

(443, L12, *Caubīs Avatār*) The Lord in the form of Narsingh (**man-lion**), with red eyes and the mouth filled with blood, thundered dreadfully.

[*Commentary*: Example of the ferocious language used to describe the *Avatars*.]

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## 5.3 Armed force in Sikh thought: history supplements scripture

### 5.3.1 Introduction

Modern Sikh notions of armed force and violence have been strongly shaped by historical developments. Approximately four centuries after Guru Nanak (1469-1539) began to preach, the Singh Sabha movement achieved an ideological victory over *Sanātan* Sikhs. This early twentieth century development had a significant impact on “Sikhism” as a static, codified and defined system of beliefs. The status of being an *amritdhari* (“baptised”) *Khālsā* Sikh became the standard life goal. Martyrdom was idealized and Sikh history came to be viewed from a new emboldened perspective. “Hindu” influences and practices were identified and purged.

Though the Gurū Granth Sāhib's status as Sikhism's holiest scripture has remained unchanged over the centuries, its interpretation has shifted from metaphorical to more literal readings of the passages that contain violent imagery. This shift is a direct consequence of the modern views of martyrs and the *sant sipāhī* (saint soldier) ideal. The large majority who adhere to this worldview see a clear place for righteous violence within religious boundaries even if it is not explicitly endorsed in the principal scripture. Historical examples and precedents set by figures using force have had more of an impact than scripture on the Sikh psyche.<sup>160</sup> In other words, an analysis of

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<sup>160</sup> The following is an excellent textual source which contains the writings of modern Sikhs on martyrdom and associated topics: *Martyrdom in Sikhism*, Ed. Kharak Singh (Chandigarh: Institute of Sikh Studies, 2004).

scripture alone is quite insufficient when evaluating the place of violence in the Sikh tradition, as with other religions.

### 5.3.2 Historical Background

In the period between Guru Gobind Singh's death in 1708 and the success of the reform movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Sikhism lacked a single group which dominated ideologically and defined a prevailing Orthodoxy. The Canadian academic Harjot Oberoi argues that the borders of Sikhism had become especially blurred during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, coinciding with the creation of the multiethnic and pluralistic Punjabi state of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839). Political pragmatism induced *Khālsā* and non-*Khālsā* Sikhs to align with one another rather than debate theological differences.<sup>161</sup> At the folk or ordinary level, Punjabis continued to pay reverence to a variety of Hindu and Muslim saints. Nature spirits and various ghosts also played a prominent role in popular religion,<sup>162</sup> as did caste-based discrimination.<sup>163</sup> Modern Sikhs typically look back at this period of history as a time of religious degradation and Sikh laxity.

As a Sikh middle class grew in Punjab due to the needs of the British colonial administration, Sikhs increasingly reflected on their religion's development. Many were not happy with the course Sikhism had taken since the death of Gurū Gobind Singh. The "Singh Sabhas" were local organizations comprised of educated Sikhs who worked towards the study of Sikhism and the advancement of Sikh interests. Two of the most notable include the Amritsar and the Lahore Singh Sabhas—the former adhering to the Nineteenth century Sikh worldview (*Sanātan Sikhism*), and the latter engaged in the developing unrest against Hindu, Muslim and popular religious influences. The latter called themselves the *Tat* (true) *Khālsā*.

The ideological conflict between the *Sanātan* Sikhs and the *Tat Khālsā* gradually swung towards the side of the latter. They were successful for a variety of reasons, notably their re-evaluation and promotion of Sikh history.<sup>164</sup> Rhetoric emerged surrounding the *Khālsā* and the history of martyrdom. Those who had died to uphold the Sikh faith (a selected list is provided in a Table 5.2) were posited as being true, ideal Sikhs who put their lives on the line to uphold religious integrity.<sup>165</sup> The martyrdom rhetoric was used to inspire Sikhs to reject the "Hindu" influences which had crept into Sikhism and to emulate the fervor of those Sikhs of the past. The early decades of the twentieth century saw the dominance of the *Tat Khālsā* ideology as other forms of Sikhism fell out of the new sphere of orthodoxy.

The impact on Sikh opinion towards violence is clear. With the promotion of the *Khālsā* and martyr figures as ideals, violence to defend against tyranny (particularly of that of the Mughals) was thoroughly endorsed. This viewpoint extends beyond persecution of the Sikhs to humanity on the whole—Sikhs were to be the guardians of righteousness and goodness in this world, though they are to use military force only when absolutely necessary. The traditional account attributing

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<sup>161</sup> Harjot Oberoi, *Construction of Religious Boundaries* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), 81.

<sup>162</sup> Oberoi, 201.

<sup>163</sup> Oberoi, 106-107.

<sup>164</sup> Louis E. Fenech, *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), 14.

<sup>165</sup> Fenech, 1.

the ninth Gurū Tegh Bahadur's death to his support for Hindu freedom serves as the ideal example of the Sikh's role as protector of all humans, not just other Sikhs.<sup>166</sup>

With this new focus on the *Khālsā* and Gurū Gobind Singh, the Dasam Granth came under renewed scrutiny. On one hand, it was said to be the work of the tenth Gurū himself, a man who had taken on a new and powerful role for Sikhs everywhere. Conversely, parts of its contents are clearly laced with rewritings from mythological Hindu literature.<sup>167</sup> The issue is complicated as some passages of the Dasam Granth make up key Sikh prayers whilst others have been historically used to rouse the fighting spirit before battle. These factors combined led to the emergence of a plethora of viewpoints regarding which sections of the text can be understood as legitimate. Some accept the Dasam Granth in its entirety; some only accept the portions not drawn from Hindu mythological literature; others reject the book altogether. The controversy over the authenticity of the work continues to modern times. The *Akal Takht* (the political center of the Sikh community) itself has repeatedly ordered an end to the debate for the good of the community.<sup>168</sup>

### 5.3.3 The Interpretation of the Gurū Granth Sāhib: From Metaphorical to Militant

Not only was the Dasam Granth re-evaluated but passages from the Gurū Granth Sāhib were also viewed as applying to outer battle and martyrdom, though traditional interpretation may have been metaphorical. Consider the following:

(1412) If you desire to play this game of love with Me,  
then step onto My Path with your head in hand.  
When you place your feet on this Path,  
give Me your head, and do not pay any attention to public opinion.<sup>169</sup>

This quote is central to those Sikhs who believe it refers to martyrdom. Stepping onto the path with “head in hand” is taken to signify the necessity for a willingness to go to the extreme of death for religion, if necessary:

(1105) The battle-drum beats in the sky of the mind; aim is taken, and the  
wound is inflicted.  
The spiritual warriors enter the field of battle; now is the time to fight!  
He alone is known as a spiritual hero, who fights in defense of religion.

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<sup>166</sup> Pashaura Singh, "Sikh Identity in the Light of History," *Sikhism and History*, Ed. Pashaura Singh and N. Gerald Barrier (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004): 88.

<sup>167</sup> Harjot Oberoi, *Construction of Religious Boundaries* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), 96-97.

<sup>168</sup> Satinder S. Bains, "Akal Takht Jathedar warns publisher of book criticizing Dasam Granth," *Panthic Weekly* [Updates 25 June 2006; cited 17 August 2006], Available from [www.panthic.org/news/125/ARTICLE/2576/2006-06-25.html](http://www.panthic.org/news/125/ARTICLE/2576/2006-06-25.html).

<sup>169</sup> See:

[www.gurbanifiles.org/translations/English%20Translation%20of%20Siri%20Guru%20Granth%20Sahib.pdf](http://www.gurbanifiles.org/translations/English%20Translation%20of%20Siri%20Guru%20Granth%20Sahib.pdf) 1413, accessed 15 April 2008.

He may be cut apart, piece by piece, but he never leaves the field of battle.<sup>170</sup>

Though this may be metaphorical for spiritual or mental conflict, it is commonly used in discussions about martyrdom. Though the passage begins with a reference to the mind, the battlefield and the fight are frequently interpreted as physical.<sup>171</sup>

(338) O people, O victims of this Maya, abandon your doubts and dance out in the open.  
What sort of a hero is one who is afraid to face the battle? What sort of satee [a woman who dies on her husband's funeral pyre] is she who, when her time comes, starts collecting her pots and pans?  
Stop your wavering, O crazy people!  
Now that you have taken up the challenge of death, let yourself burn and die, and attain perfection.  
The world is engrossed in sexual desire, anger and Maya; in this way it is plundered and ruined.  
Says Kabeer, do not forsake the Lord, your Sovereign King, the Highest of the High.<sup>172</sup>

Like the above, this possible metaphor for spiritual or mental struggle has been used in discussion of martyrdom in "taking up the challenge of death."

(579) Death would not be called bad, O people, if one knew how to truly die.  
The death of brave heroes is blessed, if it is approved by God. They alone are proclaimed as brave warriors in the world hereafter, who receive true honor in the Court of the Lord.<sup>173</sup>

Scholar Louis Fenech points out that the martyr-oriented interpretation of this quote is a blatant mistake. This hymn's intended use is focused on occasions of mourning, the message being that "a person's passing should not be mourned, especially if that person piously *meditated* on the divine name."<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> See:

[www.gurbanifiles.org/translations/English%20Translation%20of%20Siri%20Guru%20Granth%20Sahib.pdf](http://www.gurbanifiles.org/translations/English%20Translation%20of%20Siri%20Guru%20Granth%20Sahib.pdf) 1106, accessed 15 April 2008.

<sup>171</sup> Kirpal Singh, "Concept of Martyrdom in Sikhism and Martyrdom of Sahibzadas," *Martyrdom in Sikhism*, Ed. Kharak Singh (Chandigarh: Institute of Sikh Studies, 2004): p.18.

<sup>172</sup> See:

[www.gurbanifiles.org/translations/English%20Translation%20of%20Siri%20Guru%20Granth%20Sahib.pdf](http://www.gurbanifiles.org/translations/English%20Translation%20of%20Siri%20Guru%20Granth%20Sahib.pdf) 339, accessed 15 April 2008.

<sup>173</sup> See:

[www.gurbanifiles.org/translations/English%20Translation%20of%20Siri%20Guru%20Granth%20Sahib.pdf](http://www.gurbanifiles.org/translations/English%20Translation%20of%20Siri%20Guru%20Granth%20Sahib.pdf) 580, accessed 15 April 2008.

<sup>174</sup> Louis E. Fenech, "Martyrdom and the Sikh Tradition," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 177, No. 4 (Oct. – Dec., 1997): 631. *Italic font is not original to the text.*



### 5.3.4 Conclusion

The Sikh stance on Just War and violence is heavily influenced by reverence to martyrs and by Sikh's self-perception as caregivers and defenders in the world. Scriptural interpretation has also come under the influence of these factors, as demonstrated by the recitation of certain passages in violent contexts. An analysis of scripture is inadequate to explain Sikh views on violence, as scriptural interpretation has long been coloured by the aforementioned external factors. In addition, historical precedents, especially of the fighting martyrs, have had a profound influence on Sikh views of the utility of armed force.

*Table 5.2: Selected Sikh martyrs and the circumstances of their deaths*

	<b>Role</b>	<b>Death</b>
<b>Gurū Arjan</b> (1563–1606)	Fifth Sikh Gurū	Killed by the Mughals for refusing to renounce his religion. Made to sit on a burning hot plate. Hot sand and water poured on his body. Died after going to bathe in a river with blisters on his body.
<b>Gurū Tegh Bahadur</b> (1622–1675)	Ninth Sikh Gurū	Killed by the Mughals for standing up for the religious rights of Kashmiri Hindu Pandits. Public beheading.
<b>Gurū Gobind Singh</b> (1666–1708)	Tenth and last human Sikh Gurū	Mortally stabbed in his tent by assassins commissioned by a regional Mughal leader.
<b>Banda Singh Bahadur</b> (1670–1716)	One of greatest Sikh warriors; briefly challenged the Mughal empire	Body mutilated and cut up by order of the Mughal government.
<b>Sahibzadas</b> (1687, 1691, 1696, 1698 –1705)	Four children of Gurū Gobind Singh	Eldest two killed in battle. Youngest two killed for refusing to convert to Islam. Bricked alive to the shoulders and then beheaded.
<b>Bhai Mani Singh</b> (c. 1672–1737)	18 <sup>th</sup> century Sikh scholar	Body cut apart at the joints after refusing to embrace Islam.
<b>Baba Deep Singh</b> (1682–1757)	18 <sup>th</sup> century military and community leader	Decapitated when fighting to take back the Golden Temple from Afghan invaders. Said to have picked up his severed head and

<b>Bhagat Singh</b> (1907–1931)	Twentieth century Indian freedom fighter	fought until he was successful.  Hung by the British after killing a British officer.
<b>Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale</b> <sup>175</sup> (1947–1984)	Militant leader of some Sikhs in a struggle against the Indian government, seeking an independent Sikh state ( <i>Khalistan</i> )	Killed during an attack on the Golden Temple by the Indian army in June 1984.

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<sup>175</sup> The inclusion of Bhindranwale is not representative of the opinion of all Sikhs. Though the majority seem to view him as a terrorist, a vocal minority within the Sikh diaspora are vehement in their declaration of his status as a martyr.

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4. <b>AUTHORS</b> (last name, followed by initials – ranks, titles, etc. not to be used)  <div style="text-align: center;">A. Walter Dorn; Raj Balkaran; Seth Feldman; Stephen Gucciardi</div>		
5. <b>DATE OF PUBLICATION</b> (Month and year of publication of document.)  <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.1em;">April 2010</div>	6a. <b>NO. OF PAGES</b> (Total containing information, including Annexes, Appendices, etc.)  <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.1em;">179</div>	6b. <b>NO. OF REFS</b> (Total cited in document.)  <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.1em;">175</div>
7. <b>DESCRIPTIVE NOTES</b> (The category of the document, e.g. technical report, technical note or memorandum. If appropriate, enter the type of report, e.g. interim, progress, summary, annual or final. Give the inclusive dates when a specific reporting period is covered.)  <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.1em;">Contract Report</div>		
8. <b>SPONSORING ACTIVITY</b> (The name of the department project office or laboratory sponsoring the research and development – include address.)		
9a. <b>PROJECT OR GRANT NO.</b> (If appropriate, the applicable research and development project or grant number under which the document was written. Please specify whether project or grant.)  <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.1em;">15dz01</div>	9b. <b>CONTRACT NO.</b> (If appropriate, the applicable number under which the document was written.)  <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.1em;">FE R145035410</div>	
10a. <b>ORIGINATOR'S DOCUMENT NUMBER</b> (The official document number by which the document is identified by the originating activity. This number must be unique to this document.)  <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.1em;">DRDC Toronto CR 2010-034</div>	10b. <b>OTHER DOCUMENT NO(s).</b> (Any other numbers which may be assigned this document either by the originator or by the sponsor.)  <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.1em;">PO# LPR3541</div>	
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(U) One of the most important decisions of any nation or armed group is when, if ever, to wage war or apply armed force. Such life-and-death judgements are informed by and sometimes determined by ethical principles and religious beliefs. World religions all provide guidelines on when armed force is justified. Are the permissions and prohibitions similar among religions? The present work seeks to map out the spectrum of religious approaches to armed force, as expressed in the scriptures of the world's largest religions. Though the interpretations of religious scriptures vary considerably, the texts themselves provide a sense of each religion's approach to the issue. Covering values from absolute pacifism, where armed force is not permissible under any circumstances, to strong militancy, where armed force is readily adopted, this research compiles, compares and contrasts important scriptural passages. Along with the associated DRDC reports, it presents a *tour d'horizon*, surveying scriptures from seven world religions. The previous report, constituting Part I of the work, analyses three Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam and Judaism) while this report, Part II, covers religions of Indic origin (Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism). The important scriptures from each religion are briefly introduced and the relevant verses are extracted, categorized and summarized. This makes possible, in each religion, the juxtaposition of passages justifying the use of force with passages suggesting the opposite. More broadly, a comparison is presented in Part III in both a descriptive and a schematic fashion to illustrate the differences between the scriptures within each religion and the differences between the religions. The religious approaches are compared by examining how they answer the basic questions about war: Why? Who? When? Where? What? How? This variance is illustrated in the Part III by locating religious scriptures along a spectrum of force.

(U) Une des décisions les plus importantes auxquelles sont confrontés une nation ou un groupe armé consiste à déterminer les circonstances, s'il y a lieu, qui justifient de faire la guerre ou de s'engager dans une intervention armée. Or, le règlement de telles questions de vie ou de mort repose habituellement sur des principes éthiques et des croyances religieuses. En effet, les grandes religions du monde donnent des lignes directrices sur les situations où l'emploi de la force armée se justifie. Mais les permissions et les interdictions à cet égard se ressemblent-elles d'une religion à l'autre? Le présent ouvrage a pour objet de décrire le spectre des positions concernant l'usage de la force armée qui sont exprimées dans les saintes écritures des grandes religions du monde. Certes, les interprétations de ces écritures peuvent varier considérablement, mais les textes eux-mêmes donnent une bonne idée de la position de chaque religion sur la question. Passant des valeurs prônées dans le cadre d'un pacifisme absolu, où l'emploi de la force armée n'est admis dans aucune circonstance, jusqu'au militantisme convaincu, qui adopte sans réserve l'usage de la force armée, la présente étude compile et compare des passages importants des saintes écritures et met en relief les contrastes constatés. De concert avec les rapports connexes de Recherche et développement pour la défense Canada (RDDC), elle présente un tour d'horizon des livres sacrés de sept grandes religions du monde. Le rapport précédent, qui constitue la partie I de l'ouvrage, s'intéresse à trois religions abrahamiques, à savoir le christianisme, l'islam et le judaïsme; le présent rapport, soit la partie II, porte sur les religions d'origine indo-aryenne, c'est-à-dire le bouddhisme, l'hindouisme, le jainisme et le sikhisme. Les importantes écritures retenues pour chacune de ces religions sont brièvement présentées, et les versets pertinents en sont extraits, classés et résumés. Cela permet la juxtaposition, pour les différentes religions, des passages justifiant l'emploi de la force et de ceux qui préconisent l'inverse. De façon plus générale, la partie III présente une comparaison à la fois descriptive

et schématique illustrant les différences entre les écritures au sein des religions et entre les religions. De plus, les positions des religions peuvent être confrontées les unes avec les autres au moyen d'un simple examen des réponses données aux questions élémentaires relativement à la guerre : Pourquoi? Qui? Quand? Où ? Quoi? Comment? Cette variance est illustrée dans la partie III en positionnant les divers textes religieux sur un spectre de force.

14. KEYWORDS, DESCRIPTORS or IDENTIFIERS (Technically meaningful terms or short phrases that characterize a document and could be helpful in cataloguing the document. They should be selected so that no security classification is required. Identifiers, such as equipment model designation, trade name, military project code name, geographic location may also be included. If possible keywords should be selected from a published thesaurus, e.g. Thesaurus of Engineering and Scientific Terms (TEST) and that thesaurus identified. If it is not possible to select indexing terms which are Unclassified, the classification of each should be indicated as with the title.)

(U) War; armed force; ethics; religion; Christian; Christianity; Islam; Muslim; Judaism; Jewish; Buddhism; Buddhist; Hinduism; Hindu; Jainism; Jain; Sikhism; Sikh; Abrahamic; Indic; Scriptures; comparison; differences; similarities; permissions; prohibitions; pacifism; militancy; spectrum of force

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